Meeting Start

Leslie Deavers  Interim Director, Office of Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production (OUAIP),
Designated Federal Officer (DFO) My name is Leslie Deavers, and it was with great honor for me to be
the interim director of the office of urban agriculture and innovative production. I’m also acting as the
designated federal official for this meeting. It's also my pleasure to officially open this meeting, by
introducing the Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief, Terry Cosby. Chief Cosby grew up on his
family's cotton farm in Tallahassee Mississippi and attended Alcorn State University.

Jeff Davis, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Chief Cosby grew up on his family's cotton farm in Tallahassee, Mississippi and attended Alcorn State
University. The nation’s first black land grant college. He began as an NRCS intern in Iowa and rose
through the ranks during a 40 plus year career become Chief of NRCS in 2021.  Chief Cosby please go
ahead and take over.

Terry Cosby Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Thank you both and Leslie know when we had these kinds of virtual meetings, I know we can sometime
have some challenges. Thank you for stepping in.

I’d like to welcome the Committee members and everyone at home to the inaugural meeting of the
Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. I’m Chief Terry Cosby of
the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA agency that houses department wide office of
urban agriculture and innovative production. It is my great pleasure this morning to welcome our
committee members to the USDA family and introduce USDA’s leader Secretary Tom Vilsack who will
begin this two-day meeting by addressing the committee members who advise him on urban and
innovative agriculture.

Secretary Vilsack was nominated by President Joe Biden to help America build back better, by returning
to a role he held for eight years under President Barack Obama. Prior to his first appointment as Secretary
of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack served two terms as the Governor of Iowa, served in the Iowa State Senate,
and as the Mayor of Mount Pleasant, Iowa. Under Secretary Vilsack’s leadership, the USDA has taken
bold steps to transform America’s food system to make food system that is strong and resilient against
future supply chain disruption so, Americans can have consistent access to safe, healthy affordable food.
A food system that is not only prepare for climate change but it's helping to mitigate climate change.

A food system that is more equitable and will combat food insecurities by creating good paying jobs and
economic opportunities more Americans. Secretary Vilsack is spearheading this transformation of the
food system we're also taking bold, historic actions to reduce barriers to access for historically
underserved communities and uplift communities that have been previously overlooked and lack access to
media USDA resources. We are fortunate to have Secretary Vilsack back at the helm of the USDA
during such an important time in America agriculture. It is a great honor to have him with us today, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here and it's an honor serving at USDA and as the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, so thank you, sir.

**USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack**

Well, Chief thank you. Thank you very much for your service for your long-time service to NRCS and certainly pleased that you have this opportunity to lead NRCS which I think is one of the most important mission areas, we have at USDA and I’ll talk about NRCS in just a few minutes.

Let me start by first and foremost thanking the members of this advisory council and committee for your willingness to serve and what I think is an incredibly important and pioneering effort as we begin to expand the concept of agriculture beyond its traditional definitions, to include now a growing interest and passionate interest in urban agriculture.

You know, I gave a speech yesterday on the mall, we celebrated National Agriculture Day and there was a number of presenters there who were showing a variety of farm influence, speaking primarily, I think, to a rural audience of folks who have large scale rural operations.

But during the course of my speech, I essentially indicated that this was an exciting time in agriculture, because we were expanding the definition of what it means to be a farmer and where you can be a farmer and this committee in this Council is incredibly important in terms of giving me advice and counsel on how the department can best support this new opportunity. I’m excited about this and I’m excited about the nature of this Council, it is incredibly diverse, and I think it reflects.

The multiple definitions of what it means to be engaged in urban agriculture. It can mean the establishment of outside gardens and community gardens, it can mean vertical infrastructure, it can mean rooftop production facilities, it can mean a wide variety of opportunities, and I think the key here is how significant this is going to be in our effort to reawaken people about the important role of agriculture in their lives and the important role of the agriculture and food system in our country.

You all will help us make the opportunity, create the opportunity to create a better link between agriculture and food systems and people who live in an urban environment and also institutions that are located in urban environments, you know we've begun a process of supporting local and regional food systems.

And we've encouraged historically a link between farm to school, but now you give us the opportunity to significantly expand that linkage. So that people in urban centers begin to have a better understanding of where food comes from and the challenges that are associated with producing quality food. You also, I think, have the opportunity to help us address some serious issues within the urban environment in terms of access to quality, healthy fresh and affordable offerings we recently launched a commitment by the Department of Agriculture.

To focus, not just on food insecurity, but also in nutrition insecurity. We can feed people but we have to recognize that sometimes they may not be fed well.

We know from the covid experience that nearly one third of all the hospitalizations and potential deaths that occurred from coven were linked to diet related diseases that made covid a more serious complication for people. And so, I think it’s awakened a sense in us at USDA of the need focus, not just on making sure that folks have access to snap benefits and school lunch programs and things of that nature but that we
also have to make a commitment to ensure that they have access in those programs and outside of those programs to healthy food.

You have the ability, with urban agriculture to significantly expand the supply of those fresh offerings whether it's through a farmers’ market or through a link to a local grocery store or a local restaurant, we can begin too really instill in folks an understanding and appreciation for not just the issue of food deserts, but the fact that we all have to think about this issue of nutrition in order to reduce the linkage between nutrition and diet related diseases.

We spend $147 billion as a country every single year on diabetes. That's just about the entire budget of the Department of Agriculture. I think there are ways in which we can potentially save significant resources. In our healthcare system and redirect those resources into a variety of things that we all care about. With a little more attention to nutrition and I think you are an incredibly important link to allowing us to do that.

I think you are also, and this is oftentimes, I think misunderstood or maybe not fully understood you're also an economic development component of a thriving urban Environment and an economy. Many of the facilities that will be created as a result of your work and are being created as we speak in urban environments are job creators. Whether it's in the farm itself or whether it's a food hub that basically aggregates similarly situated programs, in an effort to try to link the produce and products from those farms to markets, whether it's farmers markets or schools or institutional purchasers. There are people employed as a result of the work that's being done in urban agriculture, and you can help us expand that employment opportunity and create what I like to refer to as a more circular economy when it comes to agriculture. For far too long, I think we've had an extraction economy where we take things off the land and out of the land, we transfers or port them in some cases, hundreds if not thousands of miles away where they ultimately get value added in some other location where the wealth and the jobs and the opportunities are created someplace else. Now with urban agriculture, we have the opportunity to create a tighter linkage where those opportunities that wealth and so forth gets created and stays in the Community, where the natural resource advantage is. So, I think you have an opportunity to help us reinforce the notion of circular economy.

I think the work of this Council, and the work of urban agriculture can also read reinvigorate and remind people of the significant role that innovation, entrepreneurship play in agriculture. Obviously, many of the urban farms that will get started, will be small in size, but they will also be particularly and potentially very innovative, especially when we get into vertical farming or closed system farming.

I think there's tremendous opportunity for innovation that will also impact and effect as well, our efforts to try to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions connected and the climate impact connected to agriculture generally. And finally, I think it's also an opportunity for you all to help create constant reminders in cities across the United States, starting with the 17 cities we've designated. A constant reminder between the connection that we must have, and we must be conscious of, between our human existence and nature.

In many cities, there are just fabulous buildings with wonderful architecture, but there are too few green spaces too few areas where you are reminded of that connection, and I, to the extent that urban agriculture can help by folks traveling by a farm field in the middle of town and wonder what that is and stop to ask and learn a little bit more about it, and maybe even get involved and engaged in.
In a small effort as well, and on land that they may own or operate or have access to, so I think you have
the ability to provide us direction and advice and counsel on how we might be able to essentially provide
all of those linkage that I’ve just outlined and then some.

You're going to be partnered with a tremendous organization, I have nothing but the highest respect for
the people that work at in NRCS. They are extraordinary problem solvers. They are an incredibly
dedicated crew who have an enormous capacity to provide help and assistance of a variety of ways, and a
variety of sources as people try to think about and begin to address this issue of urban agriculture.

Now some of it’s pretty obvious it's obvious that the NRCS has the ability to provide technical assistance
and these folks know land and soil and they know the chemistry and they know the processes by which
crops can grow healthy and strong and situations and circumstances where that may not be the case.

They also can help establish and provide some of the capital necessary to do the work that needs to be
done in establishing farms and urban centers. There's a series of cost year programs that NRCS operates,
and they have a good working relationship with other aspects of USDA that can provide potential credit
and capital, as well. Whether it's our Farm Service Agency or even our in some cases, depending on the
size of the community potential for urban development. The Rural Development agency assisting and
helping in food production in urban centers; they can also tie into a variety of risk management tools one
of their sister agencies within NRCS is our Risk Management Administration and these folks have
already begun figuring out ways in which they can be of help to the establishment of small farm holdings
in urban centers.

We have a microloan program now, which provides up to $100,000 of borrowing capacity over a seven
year long low interest loan can be used for variety of purposes. Now that's been matched in risk
management with a micro crop insurance program that provides potential risk management for small size
crops, and I think this is an important step we've taken an effort to try to indicate support for farms of all
sizes.

NRCS can help link all of you folks and urban agriculture to market development through the
Agricultural Marketing Service, they can work with our research components that are Agricultural
Research Service or potential grants through our National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and they can
also as well, work with our folks into food and nutrition security.

In terms of potential procurement opportunities, we recently announced $600 million that's being made
available through our traditional procurement efforts for emergency food assistance and for school food
opportunities, where we're linking those purchases with local and regional food systems, as opposed to
buying solely from national distributors.

So look at NRCS as a partner and look at it as an entity and a group of individuals that can link you to a
variety of other individuals within USDA that can provide assistance and help, as you formulate the
advice and counsel that you want to provide to me and to the department.

Look, I need a lot of help. I need a lot of information, I need a lot of direction in two areas, I mean
obviously year to year, as we put budgets together. We just finished and finally got the Congress to pass
the 22 budget. We have submitted, or the President will submit on March 28 the fiscal year 23 budget
which starts this October. Hopefully, but from subsequent years you'll have some input and advice to give
me in terms of things that you think we ought to prioritize the budget decisions we make at USDA and
that we advocate Congress, so year to year you'll have that opportunity.
And of course, we're now gearing up for discussions with Congress about the Farm Bill, and that obviously is more permanent policy. That may be some areas as well, where you want to weigh in provide some advice and counsel in terms of what type of technical assistance and information we may want to provide to Congress, as it considers establishing a new Farm Bill.

I’ve taken a lot of your time today and I appreciate the Chief giving me an opportunity to speak with you. I wanted to do this because I wanted to make sure you understood that, at the highest level of this department, there is a keen interest in urban agriculture and a very deep appreciation for your willingness to serve in this historic effort. We're excited about what we're going to learn and what we're going to be able to do together. And I look forward to continuing to work with all of you over the course of the next several years. So that Chief I’ll turn it back to you or whoever else who is managing this meeting today. I know you've got a lot of work to do, and I’ll let you get to it.

Terry Cosby  Chief, National Resources Conservation Service

Secretary, thank you for being here with us this morning and I know the committee enjoyed that and we're looking forward to working with this committee. Sir, thank you for your time today.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack

You bet. Thank you.

Terry Cosby  Chief, National Resources Conservation Service

You know, as I mentioned before the office of urban agriculture is a department wide office housed within NRCS, the agency that I have the great honor to lead. This committee and the office of urban ag were created in the 2018 farm bill. We're fortunate to have Senator Stabenow Chair of the Senate Committee who will, who was responsible for this legislation. She will be with us in about 30 minutes to talk about her vision for urban and innovative agriculture and this committee, so we thankful for her for spending some time with us today.

The committee will also advise the Secretary and the director of urban ag innovative production on development of policies, initiatives, outreach ongoing research and extension activities related to urban indoor and other emerging area codes production practices, as well as identified barriers to these practices. Excuse me for a minute.

You will have a chance to meet the incoming Director for the Officer of Urban Agriculture, Brian Guse, tomorrow morning. The mission of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agriculture practices. The office coordinates with agencies across the USDA to bring together the full scope a USDA programs and initiatives that are available in urban and suburban and also, in other areas. One of the things I want to really stress here is, I want to thank Zach Ducheneaux who is the FSA Administrator and his team for partnering with the NRCS to have get these stood up. The Office also works with other departments, like Housing and Urban Development, to leverage resources from across the Federal Government to support the expansion of urban and innovative agriculture. The Office conducts research activities and outreach to expand to produces, unfamiliar with USDA services and programs, what is available and how they can access it. The office also encourage in outreach to USDA staff to inform them about USDA programs that are available for urban in innovative producers and train staff to work with new types of customers.

An internal advisory committee made up of 65 staff from 20 USDA agencies meet regularly to consult and share best practices for assisting urban innovative production. Today, members of the committee, will
receive an overview of the work of the office urban ag. Seek Member feedback on updated urban agriculture toolkits and provide an update on urban county committees and plans to open USDA offices in cities across the country, dedicated to serving urban and innovative producers. I think you heard Secretary talk, about those 17 offices.

Members will also consult with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, about the notice of funding opportunities for the urban, indoor, and emerging agriculture grants. Members will also discuss their top three priorities for public for the public to hear and the meeting will conclude with a public forum where members of the public will present their comments to the committee. We're looking forward to that tomorrow. We look forward to the insights from this committee about how to better support and serve urban and innovative producers and complement USDA’s efforts, focused on equality, local food systems, access to safe and nutritious foods, and new ways to address climate change.

The benefits of urban agriculture are realized by the individuals who receive service. Folks, that is very important. Perhaps for the first time, that enables them to begin, expand or enhance food production to local communities. I know firsthand from my experience in Cleveland Ohio that promoted urban agriculture can inspire youth to go to college to specialize in agriculture fields, create opportunities for entrepreneurship, start up small businesses and create jobs.

Provide fresh healthy foods to communities in need and improve the quality of life or businesses by reclaiming abandoned over some basis. Prior to serving as Chief, I was State Conservationists in Ohio during Secretary Vilsack’s first stint as agriculture Secretary. We spent a lot of time together. And also, with the support of now HUD Secretary, Marcia Fudge, in Ohio was able to launch in urban area agriculture initiative referred to as a Cleveland High Tunnel project.

Although the High Tunnel work extended to cities beyond Cleveland, including the had High Tunnel build on Akron farms and one of the committee members that's owned by Dr Carl Wallace. It was great time being there in Ohio and just seeing the effects that doing this program had on the Community as a whole.

The effects of the well-being in a community because of this project, are hard to overstate. Positive effects rippled through the community provided safe nutritious food to those who otherwise wouldn't access healthy affordable food. Bringing down rates of diabetes and hypertension and other diet related illnesses. I can remember back when Secretary Fudge and I talked a little about this, you know we were talking about.

High mortality in terms of birth rates in a lot of these communities, we talked about diabetes, we talked about high blood pressure, hypertension, a lot of things that affect our health system, so anything we can do here will have a positive effect on that. As an example, during this initiative, we encouraged local youth to become trained to stall hoop houses. This training allowed a of local high school students, which I had an opportunity to spend some time with, to start a business and it was exciting to see these students out on the land putting these High tunnels together and they were able to be paid for doing that. These students were very, very I mean I just can't tell you how overjoyed they were just to be doing something, and out on the land doing it.

And this committee now, we have this committee, I know it's been a long time in coming, but I just want to thank the committee for volunteering to serve. You just don't know how important this is, and I think the Secretary just talked about this information that you are going to provide is going to be shared at the highest levels of USDA and this administration.
So, we're looking forward to working with this committee and working with the office, because we have a lot of work to do here and I know they're volunteering to help the government better serve the people and are doing their part to make the American Government. Other people by the people for the people in the words of Abraham Lincoln the first president who create a USDA and dubbed it “the People's Department”.

So, Committee, thank you for your service, and we have a lot of the folks that are on this call today. Thank you all for tuning in. I look forward to the next couple of days, and I look forward to engaging with the committee to learn more about what's happening out across the country as we move forward. So now, I’ll turn it over to Leslie Deavers and Leslie, thank you for the opportunity to be here.

**Margaret Campbell  Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production**

Thank you very much, Chief Cosby, my name is Meg Campbell. I’m a senior advisor in NRCS helping to stand-up the office of urban agriculture and innovative production. Leslie Deavers is having a few difficulties connecting with us this morning, so I’m subbing in for her, and I just wanted to address a few logistical items before we move on to introductions of our committee members.

All of our attendees have their microphones muted and their video feed locked during the meeting, however, during the open forum period on Thursday afternoon the selected speakers will have their audio and video feeds open for their appointed speaking times. Any attendees can communicate with the committee members, through the question-and-answer box located on the toolbar when you scroll to the bottom of your screen.

The chat room is closed for the duration of the event, so we ask that you please submit any questions comments or remarks that you may have for the committee through the question-and-answer box. Panelist will not respond to the Q & A entries during the broadcast, but we'll be able to see all the entries that you send in.

And they will review them in the days following broadcast and respond after the event. Finally, this two-day event is being recorded in the days following the broadcast the recording line will be made available to the public on our farmers.gov/urban website so with that it is my great pleasure to introduce the acting chair for our committee Angela Mason.

**Member Angela Mason**

Thank you Meg and thank you for having for including me in this. I’m Angela Mason I am the senior director of Windy City Harvest Botanic Gardens Urban Agriculture Programs and I’m really honored to serve as the acting chair for this inaugural committee and for this first meeting. I’m also excited to introduce you to the Members of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

We're going to go around and ask all Members to say their name, where they're from, what they do, and in one sentence, what inspired them to go into this work and I’ll start. My name is Angela Mason. I am from Chicago and work for the Chicago Botanic Garden. I, what has inspired me is that people-plant connection and how that can be used to nourish people with food and you can do that with food and with other plants and having so, and next is Allison Paap,
Member Allison Paap

Hi. Thank you so much for having me. My name is Allison Paap and I am an ag lender. I work with the Farm Credit System. I’ve been with Farm Credit for a little over 20 years based in southern California, I’m in San Diego County and what inspired me into this work has just been my work with the local farmers and ranchers in San Diego and LA, Orange county's riverside, and San Bernardino County has seen the grassroots efforts and the innovation that's been going on there has been incredibly inspiring and I’m excited to be able to tell some of the stories to the committee here.

Thank you.

Member Angela Mason Thank you, Bobby Wilson

Member Bobby Wilson

Yes, my name is Bobby Wilson. I grew up in the great state of Mississippi. I attended Alcorn State University. Matriculated to St Paul Minnesota.

For the past 13 years I’m the founder, operator, manager, community organizer, social worker and much more at Metro Atlanta Urban Farm. What drew me to the agriculture work is, I wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of marginalized and poor people, across these United States of America. And I’m honored to serve on this committee on behalf of the great people of this great nation of ours and my focus will be on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion Thank you so much.

Member Angela Mason Thank you Bobby, Dr Carl Wallace.

Member Dr. Carl P. Wallace Good morning again, I’m calling from the beautiful city of Akron, Ohio and what inspired me was my grandmother, who was a domestic worker for three years and took time to grow produce in our small backyard in the city of Cleveland Ohio to ensure that we ate. She was the inspiration.

Member Angela Mason Thank you, Dr. Wallace.

Member John Erin

Good morning, my name is John Erwin. I grew up in Pennsylvania; went to Michigan State and then like the last speaker, ended up in Minnesota for 30 years. I’m currently the professor and Chair of the Plant Science and Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Maryland in College Park; one of the Maryland’s two Land Grant Colleges. I’m an environmental physiologist. I work on heat stress effects on flowering and photosynthesis, how the environment affects food nutritional value and optimizing growth and controlled environment, agriculture systems.

I also work with growers in California, Florida, Texas, and Colorado. I’ll mention, while I was in Minneapolis, I was elected Park Commissioner for 3 terms, 12 years and helped manage 183 parks, 300,000 street trees, and all the urban ag related activities there.

Why did I get into this? I, like the last speaker was impacted by my grandparents. They took me out into the garden, and when I first grew my tomatoes and strawberries, I was hooked ever since. I’m especially I’m excited about urban ag, why? I believe urban ag can bring nutritious, safe food to everyone and diversifying the food chain. I believe urban I can create new jobs and profitable businesses in urban communities. I believe urban I can challenge our building and landscaping paradigm. Cities and suburbs to green urban communities can grow food in unlikely places and create positive societal change, and
lastly. I believe urban ag can expose kids and urban communities to plant science and farming as a profession to create the next generation of farmers and scientists and I think Land Grant colleges and HBCU’s should play a central role in this, thank you.

ANGELA MASON  Senior Director, Windy City Harvest: Thank you John, John Lebeaux?

John Lebeaux  Commissioner, Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources: Thank you good morning all. My name is John Lebeaux. I am the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. I’m a third-generation farmer, Massachusetts farmer, most of my work has been done in horticulture actually as a young man, I spent four years as an urban horticulturalist in New York City. Driving the truck, loading the dollies and the hand trucks, get packing them into the elevators and moving up to rooftops of backs of building so, I don't just have a 10,000-foot view of urban ag. I have an on the ground view of urban ag. When I assumed my position at the MDAR our department Massachusetts a one-year urban ag pilot program had just been completed. It was very successful. Founded by, established by my predecessor, Commissioner Greg Watson and since than we've rolled that out to be a permanent program at MDAR which we provide targeted investments. We've invested almost $3 million in 94 grants that we've given to urban ag farmers throughout the state and it's something that we'd like to learn more about the programs and other states. And it should the committee be interested, to talk a little bit about the program that we have in Massachusetts. I am delighted to be here.

Member Angela Mason Thank you, John Kaben Smallwood

Member Kaben Smallwood

Yes, my name is Kaben Smallwood and I’m from the great state of Oklahoma. More specifically the 10 and a half counties that comprise the Choctaw Reservation in southeast Oklahoma. My company is Symbiotic Aquaponic, and we specialize in building automated aquaponic systems where we build recirculating water systems, where we raise fish and produce. The reason why I got into this work was also like other people here, it was my grandfather. My father and I, excuse me, my brother and I grew up working on our farm in Talihina Oklahoma and any extra produce that we grow, we would take to the Choctaw senior citizen center where it would be consumed by the elders. Even at a young age, we got a great satisfaction from that, and we see this as a natural extension of the lessons that we've learned as a child being implemented into our social entrepreneurship. We thank the committee, we thank the USDA, we thank everybody involved for giving us the opportunity to participate and provide our input, thank you.

Member Angela Mason Thank you, I’m really excited to have a fellow aquaponics person on the committee, I have a lot of questions for you later.

Member Kaben Smallwood It’s worth talking.

Member Angela Mason and next we have SALLY BROWN

Member Sally Brown You can't see me, but can you hear me.

Member Angela Mason Yes

Member Sally Brown
Okay um so I’m Sally Brown I’m a research professor at the University of Washington in Seattle. I’m trained as a soil scientist; I came to Grad school after liberal arts degree undergrad and working as a chef in New York City, where I then started a local produce company, and this is way back in the 1980s and the joy of bringing freshly grown.

With bugs and different colors and different flavors to the chefs in New York, who were amazed and astonished is what got me to go back to Grad school with a specific goal of making agriculture and urban areas, a direct, making a direct tie, between how we grow what we eat and taking some of the waste from the cities to enrich the soils and just completing that cycle. And it's so cool at this stage of my career, that there is this committee and that this is happening, so thank you.

Member Angela Mason Thank You Sally. Tara Chadwick?

Member Tara Chadwick Good morning, greetings! Bawshkeengwabigwun is the name I was given. I was born for the flowers and golden eagle is my clan. I just want to say this little bit. I am very thankful that we are all here. Just a few opening words from the indigenous language of the land, where I was born, which is the Great Lakes region on the North shore of Lake Ontario. Like many of my colleagues here, I spent 13 years in the Twin Cities area teaching and learning and sharing. I live in Fort Lauderdale now in the historically black neighborhood of Sistrunk. Having a relationship with the world around me through you know what we now call agriculture, or you know when I was little what we just called walking every day.

Or you know helping grandma in the garden has always been part of who I am. In fact yesterday there was an article published in Nature that actually talks about how it's now dated to be 10,000 years that corn has been part of my family and the people in the regions where my mom is from. So, I’m here, you know living in the city, it's important that we continue to nurture that relationship and deepen that relationship and continue to find ways to encourage us all individually and collectively, to invest in that relationship, because it is a reciprocal relationship with the earth around us that keeps us alive.

At this juncture in our human history it's really important that we prioritize that as a value, as a human value, and so I’m excited to be here to be able to bring my perspective and input from all the communities that I’m part of. I look forward to you know to how we can you know increase the number of acres in production, no matter if those are the levels on my balcony or you know the empty EPA superfund site that's in my backyard, so thank you so much for inviting me to the committee and I look forward to the next few days, and the next couple of years.

Member Angela Mason Thank you very much. Viraj Perry

Member Viraj Puri

Hi everyone, I’m Viraj Puri and I’m the co-founder and CEO of Gotham Greens. We are an urban farming company and fresh food company headquartered in Brooklyn New York, where I am located now. So we grow in climate controlled high tech urban greenhouses. We have nine of them across the US today New York, Chicago, Providence, Rhode Island, Baltimore, Denver, and our newest facility in Davis California. We employ over 400 Urban farmers with the around jobs with benefits, and you know we started off in 2011 with just a small rooftop greenhouse in Brooklyn and I’m really proud that we've now grown to be one of the largest, if not the largest producer of hydroponic leafy greens in in North America and we're just really, we've been fueled by this commitment of the power of urban farming.

Particularly innovative sort of technologies that can grow food using a fraction of the natural resources, less land, less water, less chemical inputs, less transportation, less food waste, while also serving as a
positive influence in our communities in terms of economic development repurposing underutilized urban industrial real estate we built on brownfield sites. We’ve built on a former steel plant in Chicago, in Baltimore on a former airport runway, in Denver at a former General Electric light bulb factory and in Providence Rhode Island.

Employed you know so many people and really partnered with communities as well, and really believe in the strength of public private partnerships nonprofit partnerships to bring a healthy, nutritious food and create awareness of food issues to so many different people. So I’m really delighted to be part of this committee and help grow an industry that, I think really has the power to create a much healthier and more equitable and sustainable country.

**Member Angela Mason** Yes, thank you and Viraj I have to say all of the people that have gone through Windy City Harvest and gone to work for Gotham Greens have been really happy with their experience and I’m grateful for that opportunity to work with you in that way.

And next is Zachari Curtis.

**Member Zachari Curtis,**

Good morning, my name is Zachary Curtis. I am so delighted to be here.

**Member Angela Mason** You muted yourself Zachari.

**Member Zachari Curtis** Sorry, Good morning. I’m so delighted to be here. I’m here, because a woman named Goldie Johnson, not one whole generation out of slavery, managed to pull together farmland in Martin County North Carolina and feed her family off of yearly tobacco harvest. I’m here because her daughter fled to Washington DC because for black farmers at that time, access to fair pricing and the technical assistance and support that was offered to white farmers was not equitably distributed. I’m also here because I became a farmer myself. I have trained on urban and rural farms in the region and started a mushroom farm, one of the first, in Washington DC in 2013.

As a self-taught mushroom farmer I’ve learned a lot about what resources, you have to make yourself and what you should do together and very shortly after, I started my own farm I also started a farm cooperative for other young farmers, like myself, trying to figure it out Often, because of historical barriers that have separated them from institutional knowledge and the brain trust of a former generation.

I am thrilled to be here as the supply chain experience committee member, and what that means is, for me, urban ag is not just where things are grown and growing things in the city, but it is thinking about the contingent part of a supply chain that traditionally, as the Secretary has noted, has served big business and long-range transport and international supply chains. So as we build a new supply chain or several new supply chains that incorporate local procurement and local growing, as well as equitable distribution of resources. We have to, we will have to rely on the knowledge of those who have had to navigate the current system and also some of the technical resources that folks like me, have gained along the way. So I’m the Operations Director of a wonderful organization called Dreaming Out Loud. We are a Food Hub, with a social mission to inject equity into the existing food system and push for change among our cohort. I think we came to this work, because the enthusiasm around local, sustainable is great, but when we're talking about wages, access for black farmers and the existence of health impacts of agriculture itself, there is still a lot of work to do. So, we run the black farm CSA, which is a direct to customer program that connects people with the stories and produce from the region's black farmers. We want to encourage more folks to join us because that work helps us get those farmers, some who are close to giving up honestly, give them hope, gives them resources, and gives them a reason to plant a seed again. So I’m
really excited to be here and I wrote my priorities were woven into my story, but equity and putting quantifiable measures on equity, as well as this equitable supply chains and really thinking about what other parts, besides growing are needed to really get food to people in a dignified efficient affordable way and to honor the workers and the people that make up that supply chain.

**Member Angela Mason** Yes, thank you and I’m so happy to hear you say dignified. You think it's so important to provide a space that people can come and shop and eat and be part of the food system in a dignified manner and next is Jerry Ann Hebron.

**Member Jerry Ann Hebron**

Thank you, again, my name is Jerry Ann Hebron. I am the Executive Director for the North End Christian Community Development. I am located in the great city of Detroit Michigan. I work out of my neighborhood, that is, the north end, the historic North End community in Detroit. We are the Motown neighborhood, so we are the neighborhood where Motown records was birthed out of and actually the Motown Museum is still a part of our community. I was born in Lebanon Tennessee and my family were farmers, but they were sharecroppers and my grandfather. Papa Sam, his craft was sweet potatoes and so at every meal that we eat, we had sweet potatoes. I often wondered about that, but then, as I learned more about my history, I learned that that was because that was the primary vegetable for my family, because my grandfather grew them, and he had amazing sweet potatoes obviously.

Well when I was two, my family migrated from Tennessee to Detroit Michigan and we landed in Black Matte Bottom. Black Matte Bottom is an area where many of the African American people who left the South and moved to Detroit ended up living within that Community. What I remember most is that everybody grew food and shared food up and down the streets and over the fences and you know we didn't know that we were poor because we ate really well. We had amazing fruit trees and berries and that is because, excuse me Black Matte Bottom had very rich soil.

The soil was so rich that it was like compost and so that is why our community was referred to as Black Bottom. Not because black people live there, because of the rich amazing soil and so food was a part of our culture. It was woven into the fabric of who we are and again we didn't know we were poor because we ate well, and we shared everything that we grew and had.

In the 1960s, when the white flight happened in Detroit and people started moving out, businesses started moving out. We lost over a million people in our city. That also brought a lot of vacant land -made it possible for us to have a lot of vacant land. Properties were abandoned and actually our city, became oppressed or was oppressed with the lack of foods. Availability housing was very poor and so and we lost a lot of jobs.

I, as a realtor, because that was my career didn't really experience the food insecurity, but in 2008 when there was a mortgage financial crisis and I changed careers and came back into the world on that profit. That is when in our neighborhood, I opened my eyes and I saw that there was a very high food insecurity. We had a lot of vacant land and so it's like we need to deal with this. We had a very rigorous food justice movement here in Detroit and we became a part of that at the North End Christian CDC.

So why, I do this work is because it's important to reintroduce people back to their roots and we're all connected to the soil. The one thing that I can say and speak proudly of is the way, I have witnessed how food breaks down barriers; it breaks down communication barriers; it breaks down barriers or culture. We've worked with returning citizens and even with those returning citizens it calms them down and that creates an environment for them to kind of reenergize and meditate and experience the birth and the
beauty of seeing food grown from a seed that they planted. So this is why I do this work. It's also important that we teach skills to our children in terms of food and nutrition and I’m very focused on food safety.

So that's just a little bit about me and what motivates me, but the biggest thing is how people can come together culturally and we break down barriers and then we're able to see and work with each other.

**Member Angela Mason** Absolutely.

Thank you so much, and I think one of the common threads I think that each of us spoke on, in one way or another, was the connection of farming and our relatives and connecting people to the food that they're eating, and I think that that's one of the main reasons we're all here and so heavily invested in urban agriculture and innovative production.

Dr Wallace, can I put you on the spot for a second and ask you why you feel urban AG, is so important to our communities. Or really any other committee members if somebody else would like to speak on that. We touched on jobs, we touched on food access, any other parting thoughts on that.

**Member Bobby Wilson**

Yes, this is Bobby in Atlanta. I would like to say that I’ve been a part of the urban agriculture movement now for more than 30 years and I’ve seen what it's been able to do for our communities, especially marginalized and underserved communities. I’ve seen it play the role of therapeutic gardening, I’ve seen it and educational, as seen it job creation, I’ve seen in ways of producing new leader’s that come out of our communities.

So urban agriculture is more than just growing food. It is about changing people's lives and we use urban agriculture, not so much as growing too, but as an instrument to deal with challenges that our communities are faced with. I’m talking about marginalized and underserved communities and we really want to be able to focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and I think urban agriculture will play a major role. I think for 2022 to is that urban agriculture has to play a major role in global warming, so we are addressing issues through urban agriculture, thank you.

**Member Angela Mason** Thank you, Bobby.

Would anybody else like to say a couple of words.

**Member Zachari Curtis**, yes, Angela.

**Member Angela Mason** Yes.

**Member Zachari Curtis**

I'll be quick so um, I appreciate that this committee now exists, and I’ve always thought of urban agriculture as a part of the continuum of agriculture in general. You know just based on the family histories that have been shared, here we can see that human, in general, have a need to connect with the earth on a regular basis, that a wide range of activities can be considered urban agriculture and the degree to which that word helps us move forward with our work. I think we should also acknowledge that it's been a part of human culture to create agricultural products near to urban areas and far and that the distinction may help us in some ways, but also just understanding that you know for some of us urban agriculture has a history that goes back to social issues that they've been trying to address - some even for further.
I know my dad remembers victory gardens as a national effort to bolster the supply chain and food access during times of war. Additionally, for those who have you know faced persecution. Having control over your food and or over the growth of the environment around you, has been a part of our general culture building as people.

**Member Angela Mason** Absolutely. John Erwin.

**Member John Erwin**

And just two quick things that maybe we didn't mention - one is making sure that everyone has access to nutritional food. We have great data that shows that, like kale after seven days has almost no vitamin C and that when you go to a big box store where they import food and compare it to a local co-op there's a dramatic difference in nutritional value of that food.

Things like vitamin C and things that break down and I just will mention one other thing, that there's some great work out of Texas A&M where they showed that if someone can see a garden outside their window in a hospital that they'll heal he'll significantly faster. What does that mean for people who don't see greenery or trees or gardens outside of where they live. What impact does that have on their health or their ability to heal, so I think those are two areas that are becoming increasingly important they're important reasons why urban ag should be promoted.

Thanks.

**Member Angela Mason** Thank you.

I think the next two-days is going to be a really good discussion around food and food access and I’ve had a chance to look at all of the committee members priority areas and I’m just pleased to see all of the interconnectedness of our priority areas. I am going to turn this, I first I want to thank you all , looking forward to getting to work with all of you and hearing your priorities and having a discussion tomorrow that will begin right around 11:20 so, I will pass this back to um to Meg.

**Member Jerry Ann Hebron**

Angela, may I make two points right quick.

**Member Angela Mason** Yes.

**Member Jerry Ann Hebron**

I had my hand up

**Member Angela Mason**

Oh I’m sorry I missed it.

**Member Jerry Ann Hebron**

That's Okay, the question regarding the importance of urban agriculture, I just want to make two comments; one is mental health is one area of concern and with urban farming and urban gardening there is transformative, emotional support that comes with urban farming.

The other thing I want to mention is stabilizing our communities. So, I grew up in a community where we didn't have abandoned houses, we didn't have vacant lots. The kids today don't know anything about that. They have abandoned burned out houses, a lot of vacant land - taking these properties and transforming
them and putting them into productive use and creating these beautiful green spaces promotes safety and engagement and it also changes the perspective of how do you see a community. I just wanted to add that.

**Member Angela Mason** Thank you and Dr Wallace, I see your hand up.

**Member Dr. Carl P. Wallace**

I have my hand up for one reason. I’m getting so excited. You see all this wealth of knowledge, all these wonderful ideas we've already presented in the very first time we've come together. This is getting ready to be awesome and I’m just so excited for what we get ready to do. We are going to accomplish some great things and I’m telling you not only in these two-days but we are going to do some great things in this entire year. You just wait and see; I can't wait to get back out to the garden and pull me some collard greens today. I’m here.

This is what I’m talking about, we are going to do some great things. I hope every one of our committee members feels this wonderful joy of being a part of this great committee.

**Member Angela Mason** I couldn't agree more. I couldn't agree more. Thank you so much.

Do we have any last comments from the committee? Okay, I don't see any hands up and I don't think I’m missing anybody this time. I will then turn it back to Meg.

**Margaret Campbell** Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:

Thank you very much, Angie. It looks like we have a few more folks that wanted to weigh in before we move on to introduction so.

I don't know if it's possible. I don't know if Tara or Jerry or Zachari if you feel like you have anything you want to add, which will give you an opportunity now to make sure everyone has a chance to say their piece before we move on to the rest of the program or Dr Wallace. Appreciate any additional thoughts, you have especially you know anything you have to say, about what the Secretary said about economic development component, or what the Chief said about a health component of urban ag that wonderful.

Say a few words about why you think urban and innovative agriculture is so important, you know, health and economic opportunity.

**Member Tara Chadwick**

Well, um there was one comment that I was thinking of, as you know, as we were making our sort of our final comments for this section, and that is that the main thing, even though, what we now call urban agriculture has always been part of, I would argue, every family's life at some point in the past.

You know this experience with Covid really propelled me to want to take action. I almost felt like I had to take action. You know I live in a block that has a lot of elders most of my neighbors are elders, there's a few families, and you know there were people without access to food, you know the ones that without cars and even before Covid. There's too many people without access to food, and that should not be. We have in this country, we have the capacity to feed everyone, and so I felt compelled to try to figure out, what can I do more.

You know it's like, it’s kind of the food kind of you know it's always been there, but it had to move on the priority list for me to make space to do whatever I could to figure out. We have Community gardens here, but during covid they've been you know, on hiatus which is crazy because that's the time we needed them, but you know so there, there are supports. I think that you know, that, that are I didn't know that the
USDA dealt with small farmers. Honestly, I thought it was just the big, you know big people and big giant farm operation, so there's a lot of work that we can do, I think, in all of our communities to.

You know, both to impact the decisions that the Federal government's making but also to let our communities know that there are resources that can be accessed on you know for farming on a small scale for production on a small scale. Even things like supports for the entrepreneurs who want to try to figure out what to do with all these mango trees that you know bear once a year and 10% you know 20% 30% of the fruits on the ground. Now the good ones everybody just gets them up so there's you know never good ones on the ground, but the ones that would be better for jam or whatever there. So many things that we can do to increase the food, you know to increase the food access, you know to build our communities to restore that sense of community that there was before these things like you know municipal zoning and urban development, and you know all the things that broke our communities apart. So that's all, that's, all I can say right now.

Angela Mason  Senior Director, Windy City Harvest: Okay, thank you so much Tara. I’m going to turn it over to Meg now to hear the Senator Stabenow’s comments.

Margaret Campbell

Thank you very much and thank you members for that wonderful discussion. So, we're fortunate to have with us today Farm Production and Conservation Deputy Undersecretary Gloria Montano Green. Gloria is originally from rural Arizona and is a graduate of University of Arizona. Her career has been focused on government and community work and includes Federal policy, politics, advocacy, intergovernmental relations, communications, and management. She's a former State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency in Arizona from 2014 to 2017. Gloria was appointed Deputy Undersecretary for the USDA Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area in February of 2021. So, thank you very much for being here and joining us and I’ll hand it over to you now.

Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:

Thank you Meg and good afternoon to you all. Thank you very much, not just for joining to be part of today's first meeting of the Urban Agriculture Innovation Production Advisory Committee, but for members taking on this responsibility and being able to provide the next guidance of where urban agriculture and USDA can move forward. I am very honored to present an individual that I highly respect and also showing that women belong in agriculture and are strong leader’s and movement, the distinguished Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Nutrition and Forest Committee.

Debbie Stabenow, who made history in 2000 when she became the first ever woman in Michigan elected to the United States Senate. She's been making sure that there are many other first or that this is now the norm, so just thank you for your leadership there. Under her leadership the Senate Agriculture Committee has shaped forward thinking food and foreign policy, expanding their diversity of what we grow, how we grow it. She's made sure to author and shaped many farm bills, including the 2014 one in which she strengthened agriculture, made historic investments in land conservation, clean energy, local food systems, cutting edge research.

Then she co-authored the 2018 Farm Bill that showed that strong bipartisan support can move these things forward and she provided historic levels of support for all farmers big, small, rural, and especially at urban. I would say she's the godmother of urban agriculture advocacy if I could.

And just making sure that we are strengthening agriculture being in rural, suburban, or urban communities. So thank you and Chairwoman for your work to make sure that we have healthy foods for
children, families, and seniors and for your vision to make sure that urban agriculture is part of the language that we have and the work within the Farm Bill.

Senator Stabenow

Well, thank you so much. Thanks for your leadership and hard work for everybody on this great new committee and I’m so excited to have an opportunity to say hello, and congratulations and go get them. I’ve been looking forward to this and to the work that I know you're going to do for a long time. I have to particularly give a shout out to Jerry Ann Hebron from Oakland Avenue Park in Detroit. I am so glad that you're a part of this and all the Michiganders that are on the call. I really, I know I’m biased, but I think that we lead in so many areas of urban agriculture in Detroit and across Michigan so really appreciate all of you being involved in our first urban agriculture advisory committee.

This really is an important achievement. It's so interesting the politics around agriculture, I believe, very much and in supporting small, everything from Community gardens and school gardens up to major agriculture production but making sure everybody's involved. And we're leveraging all the opportunities we have to grow food and to address jobs and to address the climate issues and so on. When we're negotiating the office of urban agriculture you would have thought, with a few of my southern agricultural friends chairing ag committees, and so on, and that that we were suggesting the end of the world. It was a radical shift to be able to begin to do this, and now I think we're really going to show why this is so very important and we've had over 300 people apply to be on the committee that you're on, which says something about the interest in and about the importance, as we relate to urban agriculture.

There are so many things, as you know, I’m sure you're going through all of this in terms of advising the Secretary on urban ag policy and designing outreach strategies for the USDA which I think are really, really important. Outreach to farmers and other stakeholder’s; recommendations on how we go forward on programming and creating research. Priorities for research grants and more cooperative extension efforts. So all of these things are really, really important, and I have focused so much on this over the years.

Chairing the Agriculture Committee, because I think urban ag has such an important role to play in community and in economic development. We can really transform local communities, offering you know options for vacant properties for neighbors to make decisions about reducing environmental impacts, by creating more green spaces and improving stormwater management, a whole range of things, as well as, of course, creating new jobs and economic opportunities.

Whether you're on a farm that's one acre of land or growing vertically in a controlled environment or using a circular aquaponics system or maybe you have a community garden or school gardens, of which we have many in Michigan. I have, over the years, loved focusing on our farm to school programs and I visited many of the school gardens and it's very cool to see that the kids are excited. They’re I learning that food doesn't just show up on the shelves at the grocery store.

They're learning about health; I will never forget being at a wonderful school Frederick Douglass Academy in Detroit when we were announcing some new resources for them. The head of the football team was with us, and he said yes when they're practicing in the fall or, I guess, it was in August he'll go over if there's fruit, strawberries, or something, he'll go over in grab a piece of fruit because it's good for hydration. I thought Oh, my goodness, having the head of the football team talk about good hydration and about fruit was in and of itself worth it.
So it's amazing what's been happening, so and let me just share with you that urban ag actually has been has grown by more than 30% in the last 30 years and there's a long history of urban ag, even though we have not officially had a designated office or had the recognitions in the Farm Bill, that we do every five years, but as far back as the 1890s Detroit Mayor Hasan Pingree created a potato patch plan. That would cultivate food in Detroit vacant lots, to feed the community and then during World War Two we know about the urban victory gardens so many people in Michigan participated in to mitigate the food shortages caused by the war and then in the 1970s, we engaged in the farm ALOT program and today.

We have more than 1400 urban farms and community gardens in Detroit alone and that doesn't count Plant Saginaw Bay City growing up as a bit and hardware, I could go all over Michigan. I'm sure that I know that's true in other places, so we have a whole range of programming from Keep Growing Detroit which helps beginning growers get started, our Oakland Avenue farm. We have a whole range of efforts with the local emergency food banks and hubs for urban 4H which is something that's exciting to see as well as and in Lansing - I could go through all of the things that we are doing Kalamazoo all around the state, bottom line.

That from Detroit to Marquette in the upper Peninsula to Traverse City to Flint urban farmers are growing food across the entire state, creating jobs, access to food, opportunities for people, doing things in a sustainable way, and right now so much as we're looking at this climate crisis, we've got to be using nature-based solutions. To help deal with carbon pollution and other challenges. So in so many ways, this is a win, win, win, win, and that's why I'm so glad that you're involved.

As you know, we added my urban agricultural act to the 2018 Farm Bill. I think the sky's the limit and we've added dollars, there's more to do there and we're going to keep things going. To support your efforts and hopefully be able to expand them.

There's been after multiple years of appropriations now for the office I’m pleased to see that the USDA is taking steps to integrate urban ag. into all of the USDA programs, and one of the big announcements and shows up for us is really your committee, this committee. So welcome. I look forward to working with you and having the opportunity to partner in so many ways to really expand and create all the benefits, we know that can come from urban farming.

Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:

Thank you Chairwoman, and I believe that we have a few minutes for questions from the Members if I’m correct and understanding, so if we have a few minutes, and so, if I could see if there's a member have, they have questions for the Chairwoman.

To raise your hand.

Member Angela Mason looks like John Erwin has a question, John.

Member John Erwin Thank you so much for establishing this committee.

I’m a fellow Spartan and Michigan State graduate.

I can't believe they lost last week.

Senator Stabenow so well, I know I know well.

Member John Erwin

yeah. What a Heartbreaker
I just want to ask a question related to making sure we focus on everything you want us to focus on. Is urban forestry, do you know, and the secretary look at urban forestry as part of urban agriculture?

**Senator Stabenow** Yes, that's a really important point, in fact, I put into the Farm Bill. I can't remember the, either blur together in the office and 2014 and 18 but we've put in for urban tree program actually into the farm bill, and this is something as part of my effort now going forward when meet on a climate package with sustainable agriculture, you know regenerative agriculture in sustainable forestry, this is part of that as well, so yes.

Urban forestry is very important for a lot of reasons, as you know, including from an equity standpoint. You know we've got too many cities where it's hotter than it should be, you know there there's because there's not a tree canopy over the landscape in the parks so along the sidewalks and so on and so we have a number of things is you know. That greening of Detroit, for instance, and others who we funded over the years to plant trees and it's not only the right thing to do, from an urban forestry standpoint and urban agriculture standpoint. It's a really great way to address it taking carbon out of the atmosphere people when people talk about how do we.

It's not just stopping pollution; it's taking carbon out of the atmosphere right now. We have to do both. And to plant trees and they literally are sucking carbon that's what they are as you know, a tree is carbon their sucking carbon out of the atmosphere holding it, and so a whole range of strategies around trees, is very, very important and urban trees are big part of that.

**Member John Erwin** Thank you.

**Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:**

Thank you next, I have board members Smallwood.

**Member Kaben Smallwood**

Yes, thank you, thank you, Senator Stabenow for your work in urban agriculture and being a champion for the cause and getting this committee setup and giving me the opportunity to have my question heard. So my question would be being from Michigan, I’m from Oklahoma, and one thing we do have comments that winters do get awfully cold.

**Senator Stabenow** Yes

**Member Kaben Smallwood**

What role do you see indoor agriculture playing to help provide a sustainable year-round source of produce at areas that may not have an ideal climate and thank you.

**Senator Stabenow,** I think that's such a good question I first have to tell you that I have a huge connection Oklahoma. My mom grew up in Oklahoma and lived on a farm picking cotton she says the hardest work she ever did, and I grew up but driving down to Ponca City, you know where Ponca City is? And.

**Member Kaben Smallwood** Yeah, Of course, ma’am. I sure do.

That's one thing about Oklahoma’s we do have a strong agricultural heritage and I’m glad to learn of your connection though Oklahoma as well.
**Senator Stabenow** Yeah, absolutely, and so, but yes indoor agriculture is very important, I think the innovations that we're seeing from indoor agriculture are things that we really need to focus on and expand, both from a food access standpoint when you're talking about cold weather climates and so on, and again also from a sustainability standpoint from a climate standpoint there I think it's a really important part of how we expand out and look at urban ag.

**Member Kaben Smallwood** Excellent, well thank you and I appreciate the shout out for aquaponics as well because that's what my company does so.

Thank you again, thank you very.

**Senator Stabenow** Great, Great, Good.

**Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:**

Mr. Wilson.

**Member Bobby Wilson** Ah Yes, thank you Senator for being part of this meeting that's going on today, and we want to say thanks for the great work that you're doing as it relates to farm as well as the Farm Bill. As we prepare for the next Farm Bill, can you share with our listening audience ways that they might be able to have an impact on this next Farm Bill that's in preparation. I know some of the things that we're doing, I’m in Georgia that we are having listening sessions, and we are also working with Fort Valley State, Alcorn state and Alabama A&M which are three historical black university.

**Senator Stabenow, Yes**

**Member Bobby Wilson**

Now and we just want our listening audience, to be able to have input into the Farm Bill, as we prepare for the next session.

**Senator Stabenow, that is such a good question, and of course I work very closely with your two new senators from Georgia and I’m so lucky to have Senator Warnock on my committee. He's on the Agriculture Nutrition Forestry Committee and I know he's planning some listening sessions himself. As a member of the Agriculture Committee, so I would urge you to reach out to him as specifically because I know he's very anxious to do that. We will be starting a formal process very soon. The Farm Bill runs out.

The current farm Bill runs until September 30 of next year 2023, and so our normal process we is we kick off listening sessions, with a field hearing in the state of the Chair so that’s me that's Michigan and the ranking member’s state which is Arkansas, Senator John Bozeman is the ranking Member. So are we going to Arkansas he'll be coming to Michigan and, and then we will start formally going through every title of the Farm Bill, so we'll be doing hearings in DC asking about what's working, what's not working?

You know, where do we need to make some changes, what do we need to strengthen? So that will basically take from late spring probably till the end of the year. That's a lot to go through, so what we'll be doing that, and in the meantime members of the committee will also be doing listening sessions in their states that's why Georgia so important, and Senator Warnock is so important to all of that.

From an urban agricultural standpoint it's really important that members of the committee particularly members of the committee are hearing about urban agriculture. It's really important when I’m down in
Arkansas that someone from urban agriculture is part of the panels that we hear from in terms of giving input, this will be like a hearing there'll be a lot of different people that speak.

And that's going to be important, I will do my best to make that happen also great if folks could reach out to Senator Bozeman’s office too ask you know that someone be involved it's about being present and explaining the positive things that are happening and the vision for how we can do more and more; I mean frankly when we first started with the farm to school programs and school gardens.

You know it's a small little effort, and then the schools are so excited, and families are so excited and others that when the stories got out, we've been able to expand it and so that's how this is the first step., You are the first step with the advisory committee we've got the office we've got some funding to get started. If we're going to get more funding if we're going to be able to expand it, we have to have more people understand what you're doing and they asked to be some excitement around it and I have no doubt that that can happen.

**Member Bobby Wilson** So, what I heard you say that that we should pack up and bring the committee to Arkansas.

**Senator Stabenow**, it’d be great to have somebody go to Arkansas. Yep ,if you want to you know figure out for Georgia and who else is from this time to go down to Arkansas and then, make sure you know your own senators. real champions which I’m sure they will be, but yep get in the car and go to Arkansas.

**Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:**

Thank you Chairwoman Stabenow for the generous time and for your advocacy for your work and the strengthening of Agriculture and, specifically, making sure urban ag, is part of that. We understand your schedule has changed slightly and your team has let us know that that was our last question that we can tell, so thank you very much for joining us today.

**Senator Stabenow**, my pleasure, this is really important, what you're doing. So I’m looking forward to great things.

**Gloria Montano Greene  Deputy Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production & Conservation:**

Thank you, and I’ll hand it off to Meg to be able to share, but if I could, there was one question, I just want to be able to share as an Arizonian, and if I can take a point privilege as an Arizona in Phoenix is one of the urban ag cities.

And in the work that has been moving forward while it's historically had quite a few urban agricultures, is it really has helped for us in my city.

Where I’m home based, to be able to address the islands and communities, so I think like what we're learning here, and what I keep hearing as a theme is the comprehensive work and how it really does touch very inclusive work and just making sure that at that intersectional is really the unique space of urban ag, but with that I’ll hand it off to Meg. Thank you all again for agreeing for this ultimate responsibility to be able to profile urban agriculture within USDA.

**Margaret Campbell  Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:**

And I just want to reiterate Thank you to Senator Stabenow for being with us today and answering our member questions and for her long-term leadership support for urban agriculture and innovative production.
It's a real honor she could be here for joining us and introducing her and moderating that great session so we're going to take a 30-minute break now and the meeting will resume at 1pm we'll see you all back here this afternoon.

**USDA Agricultural Marketing Service**: Alright it's 12:57pm on Thursday, March 23 the first urban agriculture and innovative production advisory committee meeting will reconvene in three minutes again at 1pm sharp Thank you.

It is now 12:59pm at this time, I would like all USDA principles and all committee members to please reactivate their video feeds Thank you.

**Margaret Campbell Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production**: Well, welcome back everyone.

We all had a nice lunch before we move on to our afternoon segment, I would just like to give Dr Wallace one of our committee members, a chance to weigh in on what we heard this morning and offer up the same opportunity for any member that would like to say something before we move on to the rest of the agenda, Dr Wallace.

**Member Dr. Carl P. Wallace**

Thank you very much! To reiterate to our committee members, but also to the more than 300 participants that are viewing in very important work that we have to do, outside of the committee and which Mr. Wilson, and the Senator talked about it's about making sure that farm bill 2023 has a strong urban component in it that is critical for us, we need to make sure that our urban offices are going to be funded.

And you and I both know if there's no money there's no fun. And I want us to have fun, so we need to have some money, we need to make sure that we get to the point that we put our energies and efforts and become passionate about putting things in to make sure that we're going to have an urban ag 2023 Farm Bill that's going to have our best interest at hand that's the work we have to do, and I hope everyone will join me in that work.

**Margaret Campbell Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production**: Thank you very much Dr. Wallace. I don't see any other meeting, hands off. So with that, I would like to introduce Leslie beavers the interim director of the office of urban agriculture and innovative production and the acting designated federal official for this meeting. due to technical difficulties Leslie was not able to join us for the morning session, but we are pleased to say that she is resolved those issues and she's here to lead us in our afternoon sessions and discussion of the office and the committee.

The work world we have under way to serve urban and innovative producers. Leslie has over 30 years’ experience at USDA working in both the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency. Her regular position as the chief of staff for the associate she's very she focuses on the farm bill program policy and operational needs of the Agency. I was just alerted to Bobby Wilson actually had his hand up to, so let me just give it a chance to weigh in before we let Leslie take over.

**Member Bobby Wilson**

I just want to say that all of us at different places in this urban agriculture movement and, at the end of the day, we know how government move, so we got to be real strategies in terms of being able to make something positive happen, but the constituents that we work for or that we are serving as being members
of this Advisory Board. I want to say that we must use our time wisely, we must hear from the people that we are representing. We just got to get our strategy together in order to make some real positive things happen and so that's just where I am right now, I understand what needs to be done with the farm bill.

Because we can make, we have the group and make recommendations to and for the farm Bill, but it's hard for individuals to do that, so we need to be able to hear from them we're going, we are already starting. A series of listening sessions through the federation of southern coops, rainbow push coalition and through some historical black university that I named. The process is already in place and we need to figure out how we don't hear the voices of the people that's on this call today to make sure what they feel need to go into the farm bill is put there.

Thank you so much.

Margaret Campbell Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:

Barriers cannot agree more I’m here to be the voice of those people that don't have the opportunity to directly weigh in on the farm bill and others important issues, is there anyone else, Dr Brown.

Member Sally Brown

Yeah, um one thing that I noted that was really striking, is that when Secretary Vilsack was talking, he was very much coming from a very traditional mindset of USDA large scale agriculture trying to transfer that into an urban setting with a real focus on commercial production.

And then you listen to everyone on the committee stories and there was always a personal tie and Stabenow, Senator Stabenow seem to get that and seem to get the very nuanced wide-ranging implications of urban agriculture when as many people as possible or involved. I think it's really critical for us, as a committee, to try and work on that broader perspective of urban agriculture and how we need to involve the cities where the urban agriculture takes place the various municipal tools that can be available. So, its commercial ag is a part of this spectrum, but very much Community food forests cleaning programs donation programs outreach education, these are all critical components and we shouldn't. We clearly everybody's story says yeah, that's important and we got to communicate that as part of our role.

Margaret Campbell Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:

Thank you, Dr Brown any other committee members. Okay, with that I’ll hand it over to Leslie eaters.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, Office of Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:

It's good to see everybody on the meeting, I’m very sorry I was not able to join this morning. I’m very thankful, however, that we are recording the session so I can go back and listen to the things that I missed and get up to speed on the comments that were made and the presentations that you all heard.

I’m very much looking forward to the public forum where we do get to get that feedback from the public and hear what they think is most important that the committee address and that USDA focuses on so. With that I’m here today to introduce Leslie Glover who is our next speaker, we have several informative segments this afternoon. We're going to start with lighting an overview of the office of urban agriculture innovative production. In terms of the activities and responsibilities of that office will follow that up with the roles and responsibilities of the committee members. Leslie glover is doing our first presentation he is a soil scientist with 30 years’ experience within NRCS since his youth.
Leslie believed in the principles of careful stewardship of our earth and its resources and pursuing the ideal that one would be productive, put back more than you take and take a small seed and create a harvest. He currently resides with his family in Silver Spring, Maryland and he is our urban agriculture program manager. Lastly, the platform is yours.

Leslie Glover II  Program Manager, OUAIP:

Thank you very much Leslie, I’m not sure whether it's better to be the last one to speak before lunch, while the rest of that or to be the first one to speak after lunch, but I figure as long as you're around a food you're in a pretty good position. So as Leslie has said, my name is Leslie Glover the second I am the program manager for the office. Before I get started with my presentation, I always think it's a good idea to continue to remember where we've been.

Talking about where we are at the present and then let that be the foundation for where we're going to go into the future. So today I’m going to talk a little bit more about the history of urban agriculture and innovative agriculture in the US and the USDA. I will discuss a little bit about where we're headed with the office and certainly, my talk is not meant to be exhaustive.

But just to give you a little taste of what the office is thinking in all honesty, the Secretary Vilsack, Senator Stabenow, and the Chief have talked a little bit about some of the things that I was going to mention but it's always good to kind of reinforce some of those ideas and to let you know that we're all thinking very cohesively and we're all on the same wavelength in terms of moving forward with this with this process next slide.

So, what do you see in this picture? What I see in this picture is change and change like seasons can often be outside of our control, but whether we decide to transition with that change is certainly up to us. Now, in the slide I think that a lot of people would probably say that this young man, it looks like he's a little bit out of season. This slide is not certainly not an indictment of the young man, but I think we can all acknowledge at different times in our lives we have been this young man. Sometimes we don't want to change right change can be scary or it can be exciting.

So, when I heard Senator Stabenow mentioned how, when she first wanted to include urban ag and innovative production in the Farm Bill, that some of her colleagues thought it would be the end of the world that maybe they thought that they could make the decision to stay comfortable and stay right, where we are, as a department or we can decide to transition with the change. We have to recognize that if we don't act that doesn't mean that change is going to stop the change will still be occurring.

I like to focus on the young, ladies in the background, clearly, they have acknowledged what the change in season was. They changed their dress and they transitioned into that change and so to me that's really a vision of what URBAN, I think, urban and innovative agriculture can be, and why. I think Congress found it necessary to create our office, because we need to really address the change and the needs and concerns of this new changing user group.

Internationally, we know that the concepts of urban innovative agriculture have really taken off and, depending on what estimates you use, you can have as many as 50% of the world's food now grown in urban areas. The initial Farm Bill language to create our office was written prior to the pandemic, but I think it's already been mentioned a number of times. Certainly, the pandemic is forcing us to further acknowledge that change is happening, and that we need to change a little bit to.

We have to further recognize that there is an intersection between the problems of food insecurity poor nutrition environmental justice and human health concerns. And we can also acknowledge that some of
these stressors can be directly impacted by urban and innovative agriculture, and so, and not to belabor the point I think we're all on the same page there but change is coming. next slide please

So, I’ll go through these a little a little quicker, since some of these things have already been mentioned, but.

Certainly, we know that urban and innovative ag is not new to my colleagues Amy hinder shot and Maggie Gannon often say that urban agriculture has existed for as long as they have been cities, providing food medicinal herbs cut flowers and biodiversity and populated areas. And, of course, we also know that innovation, whether its scientific, technological, environmental, or social is really the hallmark of American agriculture is the reason why American agriculture has been the world leader for so long it's going to be the reason why we continue to be the leader in these new arenas.

Several days ago, I heard Secretary Vilsack and a speech that he gave to Columbia University say. We're not trying to pick communities against one another that's not what we're trying to accomplish what we really want to do is plant that seed, to increase the support for all types of agriculture and with an eye towards creating more resilient food systems. The Senator already spoke about the fact that during the panic of 1893 there was a serious economic depression and the Mayor of Detroit at the time, His name was Hazing Pedigree. Started up a food assistance grow your own food program it had about 975 families which group potatoes, beans, squash, and cucumbers.

At that time, they grow about $14,000 worth of food, and that would be equivalent to about $430,000 in today's money the Senator all also mentioned the World War one and two efforts, but just wanted to highlight, excuse me. That about 528 million pounds of food were produced in during World War one and about half of the country's produce was produced from victory gardens and World War Two and so also interesting interestingly enough, another Detroit mayor by the name of Coleman young in the 70s did the farm ALOT program.

So that kind of set the stage for the new urban garden movement which centered on food sovereignty of food justice. We know that urban agriculture and innovative production is really colored by a lot of different things and some of the committee members have already spoken adequately about that. We know that you have the slow food movement yeah, the sustainability movement, you know climate is always on the horizon we're looking at environmental stewardship Community empowerment cultural diversity. There's just a lot a long laundry list of things that are connected to this area. Next slide please.

The USDA has been involved with a bunch of efforts different efforts over the years for urban and innovative agriculture in 1969 the USDA established his first Urban Conservation District in Washington DC. In 1976 the USDA had the urban garden program under the cooperative extension program and that program ran from 1976 to 1993. It awarded, $23 million in projects and at its height had about 300,000 participants that were enrolled in that program in 1986 it was estimated that those projects produced about $17 million worth of produce that year.

I also found out from another one of our community members yesterday that there was another project that I was not aware of call the 23-city program that was coordinated by the farmers home administration and I understand that Atlanta as Mayor Andrew Young was very instrumental in getting some federal appropriations to be able to run that program so I definitely wanted to mention that next slide. And 1994 the USDA established urban resources partnership the program was managed by USDA forest service and the natural resources, conservation service under then Chief Pearlie Reed and they supported a number of activities such as flower and vegetable gardens composting areas. Tree and shrub planting building trails for local parks, creating murals, educational programs, urban habitat classrooms, large scale dry land
farming and even some neighborhood cleanups the project funded over 200 awards and 13 different study cities that was worth $20 million between. Next slide.

So fast forward to the 21st century, this has also been mentioned, to, but the creation of the 2018 farm bill. Senator Stabenow was obviously instrumental in getting our office set up, but also the secretary of housing and urban development Marcia Fudge, who was a congresswoman at the time was also instrumental in the writing of the farm bill. And so, she's pictured in the picture above and we wanted to make sure that we highlighted her as well, because we are also doing some work with that group over with HUD that I'll talk a little bit more about as I go further into my presentation next slide.

Under the leadership of Secretary Vilsack and congresswoman Fudge USDA started a pilot project was offered services in urban areas from 2011 to 2012. It was her vision to create an urban agriculture movement in Cleveland that will reduce food insecurity and help change the narrative of the city. She laid admit lead a major push for pilot project that encouraged permit farmers to apply for technical and financial assistance through in NRCS which is commonly known as the seasonal high tunnel initiative, we also call it affectionately hoop houses with our agents next slide please.

Chief Cosby talk a little bit about it, but I also want to a high highlight him as well and give him some extra kudos because it was Chief Cosby, who was the Ohio State conservationists at that time, who was the first conservation is to actually provide funding for hoop houses in urban areas, and they did about 80 of those in the greater Cleveland area during that timeframe. And beyond hoop houses, the project also undertook the efforts to bring in a range of different partners and stakeholders across the USDA. To make all of our services more accessible to that community. They also did really targeted efforts to make sure that a lot of the USDA program lingo that people talk about not loving so much that that could be translated into ordinary language.

So that Community Members could apply for those benefits, we know that sometimes you know things like that can be a deterrent for from people achieving their dreams, right. And so those efforts also included things like helping farmers to navigate the city permits and processes for obtaining leases, building permits, accessing water. The pilot project also train local youth to build those high tunnels which gave them professional skills that could be life changing. And so, it's kind of this full-service model that came out of that Cleveland project, which is the basis of a lot of the work that we're trying to do with our office right now next slide.

Again, Senator Stabenow now hit this, but the intent for Congress in establishing our office was to really try to take advantage of some of these economic opportunities that are out there for these rural, urban, and rural communities. We don't, we've talked a lot about urban but we don't want to miss out on that innovative that innovative technology that were charged with doing to an excuse me, those can affect rural communities too. Congress recognize that there were agencies that were doing work, such as the NRCS already in these areas and kind of wanted to create a greater cohesion for the vision across the department.

So, we'll be responsible for creating policy and program development we're responsible for Interagency collaboration external stakeholder partnerships. We also have financial assistance packages which is meant to help with land acquisition equipment utility seeds and plants supplies basic transportation and even co-op development. Another really key point I want to hit this is that Congress also recognize that there's an issue with food waste around the world right. This roughly a third of food produce for human
consumption that is lost or wasting globally, when you talk about farm to fork, which is about 1.3 billion tons of food per year.

And so, another one of the things that our office does is to recognize that there are ways that we can try to bring this down right one of them is through composting, but there are other technologies and strategies that are available as well. So our pilot projects are taking into consideration, some of those most preferred food waste recovery activities and making sure that it aligns with the food recovery hierarchy that was developed by the EPA next slide please.

And I’ve heard this several times on our discussion today as well, but we recognize it and we want to make sure that we underscore it again in order to help people, we have to be able to reach them. For our successes, for us to have success with the efforts these initiatives are going to hand on the acceptance and engagement from these local communities, which, of course, is where you all come in.

As the federal Advisory Committee and also where this engagement that we're getting from the public is going to come into play. Alright, so let's transition a little bit to where we are right so next slide, please. So, I know, of course, we use a lot of lingos is a lot of acronyms with the Federal Government so OUAIP is something that you'll probably start to hear a lot more, as we progress in these different discussions but that just stands for the office of urban ag and innovative production. Our mission is to encourage and promote urban and indoor and emergent agricultural practices which include but are not limited to things like Community gardens, things like rooftop farms, things like high tech vertical technology farms, all of the different products, whether it's hydroponics, aeroponics, aqua or onyx.

I heard one of the committee members stick a pain and agro-forestry practices we're certainly looking at those things and collaborating with our partners with the forest service we're looking at food deserts urban orchards, etc. But I want to also make sure that you understand that, even though our office is under the banner of NRCS again we're working across the Department on these different issues.

I also wanted to give a plug to Bill Northey he actually was one of the leaders who took the baton when our office really didn't have. A place to be within the department and he was the one who really kicked it off and got the ball rolling for the office. We administer several different programs that federal advisory committee, of course, that you're sitting on we have competitive grants, we also have. The compost food waste reduction projects, and we also have urban and suburban mechanic committees which we've managed with our sister agency, the farm service agency.

So, I’ll take a little bit deeper dive I know we're running a little shorter on time but didn't want to hit just a few highlights on some of these different programs and authorities that we administer, so next slide please. With the urban and suburban county committees, I know you've heard so far that there are 17, I just wanted to put out there that we actually have started with 11 pilot projects that are actually in in function.

And they have already had elections they've already had meetings but we're looking to roll out a few more locations very soon. I’m hoping that will be out in 2022 and we're also looking at expanding operations, we know that USDA is probably going to need to have engagement in these different cities, and so my colleague AJ Hawkins is going to be talking tomorrow a little bit about some of those efforts to establish some USDA offices and the some of these 11 cities.

We're also talking about working with agencies across the USDA to pull together programs and services that will assist urban producers and innovative. We have an urban agriculture toolkit and have a
Schumacher and Susanna Pender are going to have a session on that later as we go into the agenda next slide, please.

We have a couple of different funding opportunities we have the compost food waste reduction agreements, and we have the urban agriculture and innovative production grants.

The composting agreements are offered through a competitive process to municipalities county and local governments, and therefore the purpose of testing municipal compost plans and the waste reduction plans.

The UAIP grants, as we affectionately call them, they're meant to support urban agriculture and innovative production activities and to offer those to eligible applicants to do planning and funding.

And they're primarily, we're trying to focus them on areas that have fresh food problems that have limited of unavailable access next slide please. The composting agreements, I have several different activities that are associated with them we're looking at composting allowing more producers to have access to that, compost helping them to reduce their need for synthetic fertilizer to improve sort of quality and rainwater absorption, as well as diverting food waste from landfills and creating more business opportunities.

I do want to highlight this too, sometimes we hear that you know barriers are there for different communities. We come out with these programs, so we actually make several tweaks between year one to year, two of our funding opportunities. One thing we did a particular was to change the eligibility language to make sure and make clear that tribal governments were eligible for these opportunities and that did increase the number of tribal applications, as well as the recipients, as a result of that change next slide please.

Community compost food waste reduction, we were funded about 37 agreements worth about $3 million over the last couple of years, but we had over 150 applicants, so we obviously have a lot of interest in this particular program next slide please. The competitive grants again I said there were there were two types so I’ll just move forward on that we have a large range of applicants and awardees for these.

Zachari Curtis Operations Director, Dreaming Out Loud, Inc.: Okay so, who are you.

Leslie Glover II Program Manager, OUAIP:

Oh, I think, somebody may need to meet there okay those grants have a wide range of needs from planning to local food system establishment agricultural projects to leadership programs we've awarded those all across the country from Vermont to Hawaii and from Alaska to Florida. Next slide is.

Now, this one is a really, really popular program as well we funded 31 competitive grants worth $7.77 million over the last couple of years. But we receive 500 applications, so I was very happy to hear that Senator Stabenow as well as the chief as well as Secretary Vilsack recognize that there may be greater need to expand these programs and we're really hopeful that that will happen with the Farm Bill, as well as funding projects in the years to come. Next slide please. We're getting close to the conclusion, but also just wanted to highlight for you that our office also has other responsibilities but, besides the one I mentioned earlier, we also advise the secretary as well as the federal advisory committee, we also are charged with managing programs like Community gardens and urban farms into a vertical production.

And one of the ways that we're trying to do that is through our people’s garden initiatives initiative and you'll be hearing more about that, in the weeks and months to come. That is being led by Margaret Campbell who's on the call today. We are also coordinating again across agencies in the USDA to update their relevant programs were looking at engaging stakeholders and developing external partnerships, we are identifying common state and municipal best practices for navigating local permitting and zoning
policies. We're also looking to get more into coordinating networks of Community gardens and facilities and connections to local food banks and we're going to do that with one of our, again sister agencies, the farm nutrition service.

And then, finally, as I mentioned earlier, in the discussion we're going to be collaborating with other federal agencies. We’re saying this is really a whole of government approach that we need to take off or urban and innovative agriculture so we've been in some discussions with the Department of housing and urban development. As well as the Environmental Protection Agency and, to some extent, the Small Business Administration. Okay, by the slide again, as I mentioned Under Secretary Northey in February of 2020 also established an internal advisory committee.

Which kind of mirrors the federal advisory committee that we're on now, and the purpose of that was really to ensure that there was collaboration across the department. He wanted to also develop recommendations for policy for USDA leadership and then he also wanted to be able to provide some guidance to the designated federal official for this federal advisory committee. So, I’ll just conclude my talk kind of where Senator Stabenow was talking, we really want to make sure that the vision for this office moving forward is that it creates a permanent home for urban and innovative agriculture within the USDA so that we can serve the people were the people's department and so, with that that's just a quick overview of what our office is what we have the authority to do.

The next session will be Tammy Willis you'll go into a deeper dive with the Federal advisory committee but she's going to be introduced by Leslie Deavers, and so I don't know if we have time, or if we're back on schedule Leslie but I will see the floor to you.

Thank you so much.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO, we have five minutes of the committee wants to ask any questions or make any comments about what you had shared so we just want to put the floor back to the committee if they want to, I see, we do have some hands up all right, Tara Chadwick. I see your hand first.

Member Tara Chadwick hi um, I just had two questions for you Leslie um one you know, I think that that outreach to our communities to all the communities both urban and rural is going to be really important. I just was wondering like is there is there or will there be staff support from this office to conduct that outreach because we're serving as volunteers, right now, but you know, in order to get the word out like is there a mechanism for us to, you know have a paid staff from USDA to come in, you know come to our community event and have a table or something like that.

I don't know if you want both questions at once, are you going to answer one.

Leslie Glover II Program Manager, OUAIP that's a great question! Sure, let me answer the first, before I forget that's a really great question. So to start with, with the last part of your discussion we have not discussed having a paid outreach person from our office, but we have been utilizing some of the agency’s outreach personnel, as well as different delivery mechanisms to get the word out. We do have a stakeholders list, which has, I think, close to 5000 entities and persons.

That that we can send information to, as well as a gov delivering that we can probably at some point put in the chat or maybe put in the discussion when we send that information out later, but through those two different mechanisms we have a way to kind of get the word out, but you raise an interesting point and I will also say that.
We are looking at putting together an outreach plan once our new director gets on board. I didn't get a chance to say that in my presentation, but we have a new full-time director that starting on Monday and one of the things I know that he will want to do is for us to actually put together a strategic outreach plan and look at all of the different assets we have, because we certainly can't do it all from here, where we are. We've had some discussions about looking at things like the food policy Councils and trying to utilize as many different avenues, as we can we've also had some discussions with the National League of cities among the other, so we definitely recognize, we agree with you that outreach is going to be really critical to this effort.

**Member Tara Chadwick** awesome and then my second question is I just you know we've been talking a little bit about the definition of urban agriculture, and you, you know you definitely covered a lot of that in your presentation, but I just you know I, I just wanted to clarify about does that innovative production part of urban agriculture also include some of the traditional agricultural conservation and harvesting practices. For example, right now, it's you know sugarbush time and red willow gathering time you know in some of my northern communities, and so I just wanted to make sure, I think.

You know, to clarify that discussion because, even when I was inviting people to participate in this meeting, a lot of people were like Oh, I moved to a farm or you know I'm on the reservation is considered an urban or not an urban areas or rural area, so I just wanted to ask if you could clarify those traditional harvesting practices and whether they're considered innovative production within the definition for this office.

**Leslie Glover II  Program Manager, OUAIP:** really great question um so to answer your question, yes, we are considering all of those things. Frequently when we think about innovation we automatically jump to technological advances, but one of the things we're trying to underscore as a as an office and hopefully. It will continue to carry on is that innovation can be a bit just a better way of doing things and we understand that in urban settings and also for innovative production it's different, right. It's different from a lot of what we consider to be traditional agriculture, and so we're definitely trying to keep these definitions as broad as possible and useful as possible. On the question of what definition of urban AG, I just wanted to highlight and put out there that we have intentionally not put out a definition, because we realized.

Pretty early on in the process that as soon as you put a definition on something that that's going to exclude somebody right and so we're still working through that process of figuring out how we're going to try to make that definition as inclusive as possible. And also understanding that every agency has its own programs, it has its own statutory language, and so we want to make sure that we strike the right balance and don't contradict programs that are already out there and create unnecessary confusion. For some of these programs so great question.

**Leslie Deavers  Interim Director, Office of Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production:** nicely you have several hands up, we have a limited amount of time, but I want to make sure that the Members get to make their comments so I’m just letting you be aware of that Angela I see your hand was up next.

**Member Angela Mason** hi, thank you for the presentation, I really appreciate it. Lots of history in urban ag. We have worked very closely with healthcare provider partners to run a veggie program for people who are dealing with diet related disease and who are on snap benefits and one of the things that we noticed during the pandemic was the increase in people who were utilizing veggie or X and then also the need. For kind of more snap ED and more Community nutrition educators, we were limited in the number of kinds of cooking demos and nutrition education sessions that we could run and I think one of the things that's really important is you know access is one thing, but unless you know what to do with kale or know
what to do with some of the produce it's just going to go to waste. And so how can we better tie urban agriculture and food and nutrition services, so we can do, culturally relevant cooking demos help people understand how to utilize the produce and those sorts of things so I’m hoping that we can really dig into that a little bit.

Leslie Glover II  Program Manager, OUAIP: that's a really good question I wish we had some of the specialist from the food nutrition service on the call, but I will just say this. I think was three days ago Secretary Vilsack gave a presentation to the University of Columbia on just this issue, just this topic.

The University of Columbia in New York actually has a I think a department that was dedicated to food nutrition education and one of the things that the Secretary talked about, of course, was exactly what you're saying that need for USDA to try to expand. Those opportunities and get more people teaching these things. So I can't speak specifically, about the food nutrition service and what they're looking to do at this point, but it is certainly something that's on our radar and I’m hoping that you all can also give us, you know some good ideas about how we can maybe change or augment some of the different programs that are across the board that can help us accomplish just that.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director OUAIP and DFO Alright, thank you john or when your hand was up next.

Member John Erwin A quick question, give us a sense of our guardrails I guess, what we can do and what we can't do. I think you appreciate the amount allocated for urban ag is really tiny amount compared to the total ag Okay. So I suspect that the recommendation from this committee will be increasing funding to what degree, you know Bobby started alluded to this before, to what degree, can we be involved in testimony or advocating for increases and funding. I don't think any of the staff can but can the committee be involved in any of that process because it sounds like we need to do this, this year.

Leslie Glover II  Program Manager, OUAIP:

So that's a great question I don't think I am, but that is not my bailiwick I’m not in our legislative affairs branch Leslie is that something that you can speak to.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director OUAIP and DFO I think that's something that we can get an answer for them and provide it either late today or on tomorrow's session that will take note of that question, thank you.

Member John Erwin

yeah, it sounds like a one-year window, we have to make have any impact on the next Farm Bill, from what I just heard from the Center.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO All right, Bobby Wilson your next.

Member Bobby Wilson Yes, great freedom station.

A lot of good information came out, and I thank you, you noted a lot of things that we need to be, we need to be working on, as a committee, as an advisory committee, a suburban county committee is a big question for us here in the metro Atlanta area. I’ve had NRCS agents call me asking what's going on with that. One of the other things that we really need and I’m just making these statements cause I’m taking notes. We really need to figure out if we are going to do urban agriculture, how are we going to get the same tax breaks on the land for urban farmers that rural farmers get. You got $7.77 million, and you service 13 burden one program. From a committee standpoint of view, we need to figure out how we're
Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright, thank you for that comment. Sally Brown I see you next and Leslie were going to have to make this be the last comments, so we can stay on schedule.

Member Sally Brown First, that was great and you told us about many things I was completely unaware of. One comment that had been made earlier is it's great that there's grant money available, but in the grand scheme of things it's a small amount. Has there been any attempt to look at things other than grants, such as incentives for municipalities incentives for agencies? For example, Eric Adams newly elected mayor of New York City they had a great composting program associated with their solid waste program he's cutting funding for that.

This is a point where cities should be given incentives to encourage these things to incentivize taking open land and using it for urban ag. Incentives as a an alternative or as addition to grants. And you are muted!

Leslie Glover II Program Manager, OUAIP that's a really good question, and so, for the first part, I will say that I am unaware of any efforts on our part to ask for additional incentives outside of the grants. Margaret Campbell, Meg Campbell is on the call, I don't know if you want to mention our attempt to get additional funds to the ARPA or if that's even worth mentioning. But yeah, we realized that money is certainly an issue and we're again looking for any suggestions that can help us out there.

Margaret Campbell Sr. Advisor, Office of urban Agriculture & Innovative Production: yeah, Thank you Leslie. Real quickly we're just checking to confirm about the testifying before Congress and requesting additional funding issue or we get you an answer to that and we did spend a lot of the last several months, making plans to use our the ARPA Funds but.

The status of this one says up in the air, because of the need to send funds, we're waiting to hear if those plans will pan out but we'll keep you updated see we have an answer to that.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO All right, thank you very much. Committee members and Leslie glover we're going to transition now to Tammy Willis, who's going to talk about the roles and the responsibilities of the committee. Tammy grew up in the windy city of Chicago she enjoyed helping her grandmother plant vegetables in her backyard garden and cooking the food that was harvested. Tammy developed a greater respect for farming when she attended the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff A 1890 land grant institution, where she received her bachelor's degree in agronomy. Upon graduation she started working with the soil conservation service, and here we are 27 years later.

And she continues to help people help the land in rural areas and now in urban areas as well we're really fortunate to have Tammy as part of our team, she has been serving as the Federal Advisory Committee Coordinator Tammy the platforms yours.

Tammy Willis Advisory Committee Coordinator, OUAIP: Thank you, as well I great appreciate it, I just want to piggyback what Leslie said, I am from Chicago, I never ever thought that I will be sitting here and I will be talking to a committee about urban conservation, it would have never crossed my mind. But here we are today and I’m super excited that we're doing this because guess what the urban areas, the suburban areas is looking forward to talking with you, so you can hear their voice. So, with that being said, next slide please. The 2018 Farm Bill opened doors for USA to deepen his commitment to the people. Through the Farm Bill USDA will help the people in urban and suburban areas in some of those
areas that are in the corner of these urban cities. Yes, to improve the relationship with their food and fiber, to improve the relationship with the environment, through education and through making sure they have all the tools that they need in order to move forward to feed the people.

Through the Farm Bill, the USDA urban agriculture in innovative production Advisory Committee was developed. As I move through this presentation, I want to just refer to the committee. Because the urban agriculture innovative production committee is long and have more words. So here we go next slide. So, let's talk about the Community really quick! The committee have 12 members, the Farm Bill describes what experience they need to have in order to be selected for the committee.

Two individuals who are urban agriculture producers, two individuals who are innovative producers, Two individuals that represent institution of higher education, one individual that represents a nonprofit organization and one individual that represents a business, economic development, one individual that is very much experienced in supply chain, and I think we heard this mention earlier, and so you know if we had to take a test, I'm quite sure all you guys would know who, that person is. Two individuals, that relate to experience and exposure and expertise of urban Agriculture.

With that being said, let’s just see who’s a part of the committee, okay next slide. What we have here is Bobby Wilson in Jerry Ann Hebron and they are the urban agriculture producers that is on our committee. Next slide. We have Kaben Smallwood and Viraj Puri who are innovative producers that is also on our committee next slide. We have John Erwin and Sally Brown and these are representative from a higher education, who is also a part of our committee. We have Dr. Caul Wallace, who is a part of a nonprofit organization and we also have an individual John Lebeaux, who represent a business and economic development next slide. We are on the right track here, Zachary Curtis as she mentioned early in her presentation, she has supply chain, experience and we also have Allison Paap, who is a part of a financing entity. And lastly, we have two individuals that has experience and are experts of with the urban emerging agriculture production practice and that's Angela Mason and that's Tara Chadwick.

Earlier in the presentation we heard a lot of information from all of our executive leader’s and they have given us, they have given the Committee, the support that we need to go out and talk to all of the people in your cities, in your towns, and if you haven't received the call you probably will be receiving a call now. The committee members need to hear information from the people and come to the committee and utilize that information to start moving, we have a job to do. Next slide

Let's look at the committee terms, this is one of the things that was brought to my attention multiple times through emails, and people asking questions about wanting to join the committee or just wanting to know how long the committee terms last.

The committee terms for the Members appointments, 4 Member appointments have a three-year term, 4 Member appointments have a two-year term for and the remaining 4 Member appointments have a one-year term. If it's a vacancy on the committee, it will be posted on farmers.com. vacancies will be filled as soon as we can in a practical manner in the same manner as the original appointment was originated. So as we move forward if you are interested in the committee definitely take a look at the farmers.gov website if one is posted that's where it will be placed next slide.

Okay, so let's talk about the duties, you know, one of the things I’m going to do right now is to eliminate confusion. I am going to present the duties of the Designated Federal Officer. Next slide.

You have heard the Director of the Office Urban and Agriculture Innovative title, the director serves as the Designated Federal Officer for the advisory committee, this is the same person. So, I just want you to
know, this is the same person and we have a new director, that will be joining us and it's a lot of work that we will be giving to him. Some of the Committee duties and some of this was talked about a little bit earlier is development recommendations and advising the director. Evaluate and review ongoing research identify new and existing barriers. I think the Chief mentioned he would like the Committee to get together and talk about new or existing barriers that are out there. Bring that to the forefront of exactly what we could do and how the Committee can help provide additional assistance to the director as appropriate, next slide.

Let's talk about the designated federal officer roles and responsibilities, now the designate a federal officer role is to comply with the Federal advisory committee act that's a database that we have to put a report in. It's an annual report that has to be completed. Call and adjourn the team meeting, join the committee meetings, approved agendas, maintain required records on cost and membership, maintain records for availability for the public, and also for copy reports for the committee management officer. Now the committee management officer, she is also on this call and her name is Cikena Reid, she was the person that gave the training for our first meeting, so next slide.

The chairperson roles and responsibilities, to serve as a leader to be the leadership to understand, FACA responsibilities, the ethics, the bylaws, and any key issues that might be going on. To know the agenda and the Agency needs more than any other member, to help identify fact finding needs, along with problems with members, if there is a problem. We don't have to worry about that we have a good group of people.

The Minutes that we have for this meeting definitely has to be certified by the chair and also by the designated federal employee. They have to be reviewed after the meeting. After I review the minutes for the meetings, I will send them out to the Committee and the DFO for review as well. In the end if you have any responses you can forward your response to Angela Mason. We will move forward in that direction, thank you next slide. And I think this is my last slide but one of the things I want to say, is this committee will come together with ideas to make recommendation advise the Secretary. I have spoken to probably more than half of you all, and I think all you guys have great ideas, and I look forward to working with you, I am super-duper excited that you're here, so thank you.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Thank you Tammy for that. We very much appreciate getting some clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the committee members. If you have comments or questions about the committee, we're going to have you talk with Tammy directly about those things. Right now, we need to move to the next segment and this one is where we're going to need a lot of feedback from you. We have two speakers for this section and they're going to be talking about the urban agriculture toolkit and your experiences are going to be extremely valuable and making sure that this is a product that the customers will need and be able to use.

So, our first speaker is Havala Schumacher she grew up among the Cornfields of Iowa but spent most of her adult life in both coasts and cities. She is a firm believer that everyone whether they're on a family farm in a suburban backyard or on a city lot should have access to powerful experience of putting their hands in the soil, she holds a master's degree and natural resource policy and administration from the University of Florida and Havala will be joined by Suzanne Pender who believes that everyone should have access to healthy fresh local food and that gardens have the power to nourish and inspire generations. After working at the Smithsonian Hirschhorn miss Nam and the USDA Natural Resources, Conservation Service She's now a strategic communications coordinator in USDA forum production and conservation mission area and is passionate about communicating how USDA can help urban producers. Havala and Suzanne the platform is yours.
Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP Thank you Leslie good afternoon committee Suzanne and I are delighted to have the opportunity to do a little show and tell this afternoon and talk to you about the USDA urban agriculture toolkit. We're going to give you a quick overview of where we started and where we are going, but as Leslie mentioned, we don't want to do most of the talking. We're going to spend about 15 minutes telling you about what we've been up to and then we're going to take the rest of our time to have a conversation with you so without further ado next slide.

So, let's have a quick peek at where we started if you've browsed USDA various web pages, you may have come across the document on the right, which was the original toolkit that we released a few years back. This document contains a lot of valuable information about how to fund your farm how to get started technical advice. It has one big limitation, though, which is that it mostly contain links to both USDA and non-USDA resources. This created two problems, the first is that if you print a document with a lot of embedded links you very quickly lose a bunch of the content. The second problem is that the links themselves can quickly get out of date or redirect to places that you do not intend for your audience to go. Because of these challenges, we decided to take a different approach, this time and rather than ask how we can get all of our resources into one glossy printable take home document.

We thought about how our customers were most likely to access information, whether it's a printed resource a website, or something else so on the next couple slides Suzanne walk you through the various products we've been working on Susan.

Suzanne Pender Strategic Communications, Farm Production and Conservation Okay, thanks Havala, so toolkit 2.01. One way to think about this is as Havala said, instead of one document being called a toolkit. All of these different pieces that we're going to go through our tools in the toolkit so I just want you to keep that in mind, and this group of tools that will be sharing with you. This morning is not finite and can certainly expand and we expect to be creating more tools for this Toolkit to. Ours. Quick reference guides that we, we will be sharing with you. One is called get started with urban agriculture is a basic guide to walk urban producers through the process of working with USDA describing what's available in the process of getting a farm number, for instance, from the farm service agency and all of the different steps involved.

We have a fact sheet on the office of urban ag an innovative production grant. Also, one on you on the federal advisory committee explaining what the federal Advisory Committee does. And then also we have one that's been existing which is on the composting and food waste reduction, work in cooperative agreements.

We also have a new at a glance guide, that is for the customer, to be able to at a glance look at a chart and it's 67 pages and it's focused on what is the program, what does it do, what is it for agency, is it for producers, or is it for nonprofits and groups, and you know larger organizations. Those key items are what we're going to be talking through also did want to let you know, we do also have some agency specific resources that we are going to be looking at revising one on NRCS and one that will be working on for FSA specifically, next slide. Part of this also includes a redo of our websites, right now farmers.gov/urban houses a lot of information from the office of urban ag and innovative production it was actually created when the office was stood up.

Because we needed some place to put all of this information, we have taken a step back and are reconfiguring these websites with farmers.gov/urban being farmer specific information. Like all of the information on farmers.gov is supposed to be, and then we are creating a USDA.gov/urban website that website will house information on this committee, the office of urban ag and innovative production. cooperative agreements and some more Community and organizational type information.
And I'll hand it back to Havala, next slide.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP** All right, so let's talk a little bit about our approach we started by kind of sifting through the mountain of already available information already available resources that are available to urban farmers and gardeners. So this included the existing toolkit as well as feedback from colleagues too numerous to mention. As well as various USDA agencies advice we got from our urban ag internal advisory committee that my colleague Leslie Glover mentioned earlier and other resource guides available on our websites, such as one directed to tribal communities where there are many overlapping concerns.

We compiled all of that and took a good hard look at what we had asking ourselves what resource for, does it help our community members in the urban community members find funding or maybe it contains technical guidance on growing the right crops or information about how to ensure our market those crops. Who is it most useful for and should an individual who wants to start an urban farmer Community Garden explore it or is it more useful for local nonprofits or educational institutions who's it for? Finally, we thought through, where should we put this resource, so that it is as easy as possible to find you know. I think of this as my husband has a wall of tools in the garage that he uses for maintaining our old VW van he's got another desk full of tools for stuff at work and putting the right tool in the right place is just as important as having it sometimes.

Our main goal was to make sure that it was easy to understand at a glance how to use each resource. Again, we'll be looking for your input on whether we got this right. So, the other thing that we wanted to think about and to avoid is that the USDA urban ag toolkit is not the only tool kit in town. In fact, some of our committee members today may have been closely involved in producing urban ag tool kits or resource guides for their own community, some of these include a toolkit produced by the US botanical garden with collaboration by the Chicago botanic gardens windy city harvest, there is a forest service toolkit so those asking about Community forestry efforts, there is a resource available there the sustainable agriculture resource and education, has a how to guide. That's a close partner with us and with NIFA, a major USDA partner, there are a number of nonprofits with toolkits and the EPA has an urban farm business plan handbook. So, we will likely link to many of those resources so that they're available but, again, we didn't want to duplicate the work that's already been done by our partners across government and across communities.

So, here's another set of things that we asked ourselves. Was this resource directly relevant to urban producers and other me, in other words, is it immediately obvious to somebody who wants to start an urban farm or get. get something on the ground, what they can do with this, if you visit the website for the resource is it clear to somebody in an urban area that this resources for you.

This is an area that we've maybe done most of our soul searching and trying to figure out whether the language that we're speaking on all of our web pages is speaking to the people that we want to reach and finally related to that second question. What are our customers and by customers, we mean both people who currently use their services and people who may potentially use our services we don't know about us, what are you looking for? The last thing that we want to do is list a resource and then have one of our customers walk into a USDA office or visit a website and not be able to find information or find information that doesn't apply. All right, so with all that in mind I’m going to turn it back over to Suzanne to dig into what we've been producing a little a little further.

**Suzanne Pender Strategic Communications, Farm Production and Conservation** great things, you can see a little screen grab of that shows the urban ag at a glance and it, as I mentioned. We have actually broken the assistance into different categories such as funding on farm guidance. In different sort of
categories of assistance so again, it's just quickly if you're looking for the types of assistance available looking at these into different categories, you can also.

See, as I mentioned, there are checkboxes because some of our programs are not for individual producers and we wanted to make that clear, some of them are for both. And we also did do a lot of consideration about operations that are not traditionally may be considered urban and not rural sort of the place where these two places meet. Our rural development programs can be used for a lot of these activities, and because the name rural development doesn't seem to be relevant to urban AG, we wanted to make it very clear that these programs can be used for a lot of those sorts of operations, next slide.

Okay, this is our current farmers.gov/urban website and, as I mentioned, we talk about the office of urban AG, we talk about our grants it's mostly that what this office produces. And our new design is really much more about cross departmental resources for producers, and it also is like a toolkit it is, but it links directly to information so. The information on the page will link to, for instance, specific agency programs, but it will be categorized in organized along the lines of these also productive applications. Next slide.

So, what you were seeing was our current website, which I described was put up when the office was stood up fairly recently. So the new one producer focused will include specific sections for starting financing and protecting an urban farm, acquiring guidance and technical assistance on the farm and marketing, and selling products, we will also have group specific information for community farms, school farms and other things like that. Also will link make sure that we cross link with the new USDA.gov/urban so folks looking at farmer stuff can be directed to that information as well. next page.

Okay USDA.gov/urban it, this is instead of being farmer specific, it is wider organizational and public focus. It will have information for groups and communities' resources focused on local and regional food system work. Program programs like with and then of course federal advisory committee office of urban ag and innovative production and the organizational type of information that USDA has to offer. Okay.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP** All right, that was our brief roadshow so now it's your time. We're really hoping that folks will just put their hands up for any of these items again, you know we can take our best guesses what's going to be useful to you, but at the end of the day, we're on the we're on the producing end and not the customer. So, I guess I’ll ask the first question first, which is what kind of information your community needs most from USDA. Whether that's information that we currently provide that's hard to find or whether it's something that you just haven't been able to find on our web pages or our program offerings.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO** So Havala Sally Brown has her hand up. All right, go-ahead Sally.

**Member Sally Brown** So, one thing there's a couple of things here, one is that Extension agents and their share of information and how. Are you can you gear this in any way so that extension agents have appropriate tools for their regions and for the questions that are asked? It seems like you're trying to provide a little bit for everybody and, as a result you, you may not have enough for a specific. Second is you're not segregating it into different groups who will ask the questions so it seems like a heavy emphasis for commercial producers. But for Community gardens it much less clear, so if you could segment it and have your links for particular types of producers or types of urban agriculture.

Finally, as a soil person I was looking through the documentation and the different links and in urban areas, many people are concerned with contamination or the potential for contamination of urban soils
you get following the links, you get contradictory information and you refer to one or two soil testing labs. It would be great to have it by region, it would be great to have it, so that the information provided is consistent. Rather than one lab is going to use this test and set a limit of 50 the other lab is going to use another test and set a limit of 500, so I’ve now said way too much and I’m going to mute myself.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP:** No, no that's really helpful Sally to respond, just to some of that and I think some of this is just notes test for us to take too late for later. We do plan on linking to a number of EPA’s resource resources as the experts on some of that soil testing stuff I don't know if some of your comments, might have been on the prior version of toolkit where there were quite a number of links on different resources.

So one of the things we have tried to do is you know sort of pair this down to the most definitive information, where possible, rather than give you the world right if everything is important, nothing is important, try to give you the punchy yes resources. Really good point about resources, for you know it still feels like it's for commercial producers. One thing that we really are trying to do in the at a glance particularly is drive those resources that an individual can apply for so that's not necessarily a commercially connected individual who's got experience in farming but that could be you know somebody.

A member of their community who wants to start a community farm the rest of those notes, I think we're going to have to take home and take a look at, and I know we've got more hands up, so thank you again Sally.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO** I think it's fair to say that we didn't, we're not taking away the responsibility of individual agencies to create outreach products, as well right.

Right.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP:** And you know, to the point about extension. It is a really important resource and you know I think there's a world more that we can do to collaborate with our USDA partners like extension to get information out.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO** All right, Bobby Wilson.

**Member Bobby Wilson** Yes, I just want to start by saying just because your cell Metro Atlanta Urban Farm picture on the cover page of the resources that don't mean Metro Atlanta Urban Farm got that money cause my grant with turn down. I also want to say that, as we think about programming and, and these are some things that I’m going to be bringing back to the committee. I was in a meeting this this past week on Tuesday and extension agent that came to talk to the group at no experience so.

We need to figure out how we going to get training, for extension, agents, so that a lot about eight people is going into agriculture now. They are coming out about inner cities and don't have any training The other thing that I want to add to the conversation is that there's a challenge. For a lot of us people who look like me that walks into the farm services agency, especially in my part of the country that tends to be overlooked. And so, when you talk about going to the go government agency and going to the local office, because I work with minority disadvantaged farmers, I hear quite often.

We need to look at this from the ground up. I didn't hear any comments around where we talk to anybody from the American Community gardening association from food first, we have an organization here in a way of funding food well Alliance is doing great thing.
Alabama A&M has a strong agriculture program and in Birmingham and I’ve worked with them quite often in so if we’re going to build a strong urban agriculture program and platform where folks can get information, we need to talk to some of these organizations that’s already doing it. So, and the other thing that we need to be trying to figure out is funding for some of these committee members to attend the hearing in Arkansas and I just thought I’d throw that out there, right now. Thing that we need to do, I will keep throwing them out there whether it impact you or your impact your presentation or not. If we are here it enough we might do some work around it. Thank you no comments necessary.

Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP: Thank you and I’m going to comment anyway Bobby really appreciate that it's you know it's all connected to each other, so I don't think this is the wrong place to bring those points up again at all I think Tara was next.

Member Tara Chadwick gotta unmute myself, okay first of all, I just wanted to clarify that the screenshots that you showed us on your slides are not representative of what is currently available if we go to either of those farmers.gov or USDA.gov websites, is that correct? This version is not yet live.

Suzanne Pender Strategic Communications, Farm Production and Conservation that's correct.

Member Tara Chadwick okay. So that's good I love the new graphics, even if it is using a picture of someone who didn't get funded, I like that differential between the two. I also there's three things that I wanted to bring to your attention, and one is I really enjoyed the little kind of quick view into funding and financing um you know because I think that's a huge reason for why people try to access usage at all is because it's related to their search for funding and financing. I’m not 100% convinced that the approach of looking at it from the three different you know, maybe it's going to work but I’m just saying like even on the committee, you know some of us are individual producers, some of us also work for a nonprofit and some of us also work with you know. So you're like the kind of looking at who's trying to access from what point of view might be, from my perspective, it would be a little more confusing than putting all the putting all the resources there and having a column for if you're an individual, you can apply for this if you're you know. A nonprofit because don't you know because I don't know. Seems to me that a lot of us were a lot of different hats at different times so that's just one feedback that I had

Another was most of the people that I know who are actively engaged in agriculture aren't even to the point where they would even walk into, like they wouldn't even consider walking into you know, like there's like. I would say, the vast majority of people that we need to target, are the ones who aren't even aware, yet that these resources are here, from my perspective. And so, there's you know this barrier to access that you're talking about, for example all the ladies that I know that have lemon grass in their yard that they're trading with each other, or you know go to get the avocados and you know.

Drop some at your doorstep when they have too many, they don't even have computers like they have flip phones and they have hard time using them. So like even having the website at all, you know, like, I noticed someone had said I think you had said earlier that a lot of times you’re these this material that's on the website has to be printable and so that's an example of why it also has to be translatable into the different languages that you know are spoken on the block here so um so that barrier to access even you know. For example, the other issue that we have here is there's a lot of people who are in temporary protected status, a lot of Haitian people who are here, you know, are they eligible, are they not. If they come if they even log on to this website is that going to you know, be a nick on there, whenever they try to apply for citizenship, you know, like So these are some of the barriers to access.
That I’m that I’m thinking of when I when I see this material. Then the final thing that I wanted to mention really quickly is you know; I just want to encourage you to continue on this idea of cross collaboration, because I’m, for example, you know, one of the biggest earliest access to that I that I did to know that USDA was here was through that you know us forest service kids in the woods, you know, like people don't know that that's out there, but that's like that enabled us to get our whole community.

You know out into the cranberry marsh you know, like and so like that all of those other resources that were trained into our silos to not consider I think all you know, the more that you can allow people to see that they exist, the better it's going to be for all of us in the in the long run.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP** Thank you Tara I just want to do a time check, not sure whether we have till 25 after the hour 35 after the hour.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO** You have until 35 after the hour.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP** Okay super. I really just before we call on our next person want to highlight what Tara brought up about trust in our local communities right getting people in the door and overcoming those barriers that may even be clicking on a on a government website my job, immediately before this one was outreach for the US census, and you know many of those same barriers about people not wanting to approach a government agency.

Hold true here as well, so curious to hear folk’s thoughts about those things as well right getting people over that hurdle of walking in the door to a USDA office or the fear of clicking on a on a website.

Dr Wallace I think your hands been up for a minute there.

**Member Dr. Carl P. Wallace** it's been up for just a minute that's all, just want to offer a couple things one I got to do a procedural piece. We've had some excellent, we are 12 dynamic committee members. And I’m telling you the comments that have come from my committee members are just absolutely wonderful on point and I’m not trying to judge them but you're doing a great job. But procedurally, we need to hear from other committee members as well. There's a lot of our members that have not had a lot of input. So, I need to encourage those Members who have not had a chance to voice some of their concerns and things, please speak up.

And please make sure we participate in this. I have a personal comment, and I need to share this with you, first of all I’m own oh man. You need to change the font on this toolkit, I don't need to read your toolkit through a magnifying glass okay. So, change the font I don't care how many, what you gotta do but that's something that is basic. The second thing is, and I don't want you to minimize Bobby's comment. That was very, I hope that hits you right in the heart that was really very hypocritical to use him on a cover page that he is denied funding, so I need you to just take a self-evaluation and take a look at where we are with this. Those are my two points.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP:** Thank you, Dr Wallace really appreciate that. All right, well, I think John Erwin has also had his hand up for just a minute.

**Member John Erwin** Alright, so I just asked to mention a couple things I completely agree with what Carl said we want everyone to participate in this. So a couple things I went through the document and looks like you could use additional language on food safety, food safety is just a critical piece just easy ways and simple ways to make sure that the food is clean and safe will be helpful. You know, when we work with students what the one of the first things, they look for on a website is they want to see model
successes, give me some examples of people who have been successful and the way they did it. Like their story and the different steps they went through that's very helpful.

I completely agree with Sally said with contaminated soils it's one of the first questions I always get is this a safe place to grow food. And having good standards around that so people are confident. I just have a couple other points, you know. Google allows you to have a number of search engines like CEA, like search words are categories you pay like an extra 100, 150 bucks and you can add those search categories and then your site will pop up more. When they do searches because they're more relevant to those so, that's always a helpful thing.

Over 60% of the students that enter the University of Maryland did so, first through their phone, so I encourage you to make it mobile phone friendly if it's not you know doing something, make sure that's begin will be important. Then, I don't know if we're doing much to outreach to what I would call nontraditional audiences. You know, for instance, churches are almost a built co-op already. How are we trying to collaborate with churches and some of those organizations? Are we making sure we have outreach to those; I think that's critical? That's it just a list of things I don't need any comments back, I just wanted to give us thanks.

Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP

Alright, thank you very much. It's like from one John to the other John Lebeaux, you got your hand up.

Member John Lebeaux Yes, I do thank you, relative to the question about how to better inform. I hope it's not too elementary but you know the State Department of Agriculture are constantly pushing out information that comes to them from USDA. The State Department of Agriculture are often plugged into the urban agricultural environment in their respective States, certainly we are in Massachusetts We work very closely with our urban ag coalition, we made them aware of this meeting. We think some folks or I've seen some folks on the participants lists of attending I believe for mass so I strongly encourage this committee in the office to take advantage of a communication tool that already exists, the channel that already exists. On a recent one of the presentations earlier, I think it was Leslie Glover's excuse me, there was referenced to food policy Councils. Often State Department of Agriculture are very much plugged into food policy councils and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We have statutorily created food products state Food Policy Council on which I serve as the Chair, and then we can trickle down, at least initially to the to the local government’s municipal governments.

For instance, the city of Boston just in the last month, created a new office called grow Boston office of urban AG, with which we are acquainted with the director over there who's actually attending the call today shining fletcher so. Certainly, I think we all know, there needs to be multiple communication channels to get messages out but one, I would say relatively easy one, is to rely on the State Department of Agriculture.

Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP: All right, thank you very much, Viraj.

Member Viraj Puri Hi folks, so I think two areas where we can bolster that the toolkit is again in terms of listing resources is particularly around workforce development programs whether they're private sector academic or private sector. I think everyone in this group will agree that to continue to support urban agriculture we're going to need to invest in building the workforce, the skilled Labor force that the sector requires. We need more skilled farmers, plan scientists, plant managers, you know things of this nature. People with expertise and food safety. I’m really glad to have heard that so to create these new categories of jobs and all these cities.
So I think having a database of different types of programs that are available, even university degrees, I think, would be very helpful and then along those lines again a database of different themes. We've talked about the regulatory hurdles are on soil around regulations around urban farming so clearly, this is a federal agency, but so many municipalities’ cities, states, towns have their own urban farming regulations and regulatory framework and I don't know if it's appropriate to list a database of different cities, towns municipalities regulations. Certainly, we would have to stay I would imagine a neutral and not say some are better than others but listing them as resources so that potentially advocates in a given town or city, can then look at how other places are doing it. Then advocate for their own towns and cities and pick and choose if they find certain type pieces of legislation and regulatory framework that will be helpful.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP:** Alright, thank you very helpful Okay, I see two more hands, I think that's going to take us right to the end of our time, so I think we've got Allison first and then Zachary.

**Member Allison Paap**
Great Thank you so um, I just wanted to comment really quickly in this kind of reiterating some of the remarks that other committee members have made that, in the spirit of being able to be as wide ranging in our outreach as inclusive as possible. Maybe, including either as part of the toolkit or as a standalone document a glossary of terms. I think we tend to use a lot of acronyms and a lot of jargon in our own areas and that can be a little bit intimidating and a little bit confusing. Another thing kind of in that same vein, would be a little bit of definition or clarification around the different areas of USDA specifically, I think people don't necessarily understand the difference between NRCS and FSA and different elements within USDA so when they're trying to engage with these agencies and engage with the groups, there can be a little bit of confusion just around general vocabulary.

**Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP:** Good points Allison and thank you for asking us to check our blind spot. Zachary I think you get the last word.

**Member Zachari Curtis**
Oh, goodness! Um what I want to echo all of what's been said, especially around representational equity, I think the USDA should move at the pace that it's actually making impact in people's lives and if you're not funding someone then yeah don't use them as a representation of diversity that hasn't really been achieved yet, and I can see how that would be hurtful and I totally I've been there before.

I do want to say that to that end, understanding that the USDA itself as an agency function through local more local channels so extension agents. I want to see what education has been brought down to those local agents about urban ag what is are we listening. You know a lot of cities don't necessarily have an extension office inside of them I’m in DC and we don't. I have to communicate with Maryland to get most of the resources that we need, and so maybe an explainer about what extensions can do. I work in supply chain, so I think that the information relevant to distribution packing preparation partnership.

Is important LSTP, and all those funds for farmers, markets, and food distribution. I do think that more emphasis on the grievances civil rights complaint anything like that should be front and center. I don't believe that we should take for granted that maybe groups who have limited access to have had limited access to the USDA information or who have experienced. You know negative or have had negative experiences may not know where to go to discuss areas of growth is what I’ll say. And so, and I want to echo that yeah accessibility, I can read the website, but I know that there's others that can't read 14-point font.

There there's a lot of the government has already invested in accessible materials, whether that's large font or multiple language internal translation tools, other things like that, but I do want to say that I’m most
concerned with any information that makes it clear that the USDA understands that it's actually challenging to get help from the government. There may be things that you're working on, as far as like, I said educating extension agents connecting people to nearby municipalities explaining what extension agents are supposed to be doing. And offering assistance chain of command information and grievance processes very transparently.

Yeah I think that, in my experience more citizen participation in program. I was a grant reader for the 2501 of the I guess it was the first year that citizens were able to read and evaluate 2501 grant and that was a growing edge for the department, and I think I just want to encourage you to do more of that. I think that people understand fairness in a way that kind of can cut through a lot of the bureaucracy. I could suggest other things, but I know technical assistance is such a sometimes the term that is used to some community members, it means doing nothing.

I think that there's something, I really do believe in certain types of technical assistance having the potential to make a great impact but understanding that webinars and workshops are not what people need necessarily. I’m so sorry for the noise in the background. So if those are going to be provided I’m just kind of figuring out what the what figuring out in articulating what the next step for someone who may you know not know where to go.

And so I’m happy to think more about it and be more helpful, but I was reading all of the comments, a lot of them have to do with funding. Larger chunk also have to do with the regulation of basically environmental regulations and urban land, and I think anything that speaks to those two things and we want to know about funding make that front and Center but also earth safety, food safety and where the USDA stands on the use of, seemingly, the use of certain materials that have a sort of double edge. I think the there was a specific mention of sewage sludge in a lot of the comment. That's my input I’m happy to be with so many smart people that have said what needs to be said. And I just want to. leave it there.

Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP yeah, thank you so much, and I just want to thank you Zachary and your colleagues on this committee for holding us accountable. And I will turn this back over I think there's a lot to be dug into and future meetings back over to Leslie.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Thank you all very good comments, so far, I wanted to point to two things before we take us quick stand-up break. One is we have posted on the slide contact information for the presenters during this segment. We don't want this to be you know, the end of the communication we want there to be ongoing communication, so this is the access information for each one of those speakers. Also, the question was asked about visiting the hill or participating hearings earlier.

In the section and we got an answer back from our office of ethics that was as long as you are on your own time and speaking on your own behalf, or at least not on behalf of the Committee, you are free to testify before Congress, or have meetings with folks. And if interested if committees interested, we would like to set up a conversation with the office of ethics, just to make sure that you have all the details, you need to keep everybody on the right side of right. So that's that we're going to take like I said this quick stand-up break of we can be back at 2:45 pm we'll get started on our next section, so thank you and enjoy the break.

Stand-up Break for 15 minutes

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright, I see that it's 2:45, I hope people had a chance to stretch a little bit stand up, take a quick break. We're in the homestretch now of the meeting, but we still have a couple of important things to get through.
This next section we're going to hear from Bradley Ryan, who will be speaking with us about indoor urban and emerging agriculture grants that are offered through the National Institute of food and agriculture.

Bradley is the National Science Liaison within the sustainable systems, technology, and social sciences unit of the National Institute of food and agriculture. National Science Liaison support the agency's research, education, and extension polio they provide. Broad scientific and technical expertise and coordinate stakeholder and inner agency interactions. Over his 30 years of service that USDA Bradley has provided program oversight as a national program leader division Director or acting deputy director for approximately. 70% of NIFA grants and capacity funds, he is the recipient of the Secretary's Honor Award and the A.J. DEI Award for diversity.

He is a fellow of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers and a past president of the International Society of Agricultural Safety and Health. He grew up working on his family's integrated crop and livestock farm in western Nebraska and I'd like to turn the platform now over to Bradley.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA Great! Well, thank you Leslie I really appreciate that introduction. Basically there's a lot to say when you've been around 30 years but you kept it nice and short, I appreciate that. One of the things I like to say is first of all, I don't think I can overstate how glad I am to finally get to meet with this advisory council to discuss and basically get your input and coordination on how we will move forward on this program. Again why don't we go to the next slide. As Leslie mentioned I’ve been, actually throughout my career I’ve had responsibilities, these are the three functions of the National Institute of food and agriculture, we support research, education, and extension.

I have been involved in as a researcher and an extension specialist in the land grant system prior to coming to USDA 30 years ago. One of the things I’d like to say is when I started the USDA extension service, about 1995 extension was merged with the Corporative State Research Service and I had picked up the education component. So what had developed over the years is integration of those three functions and in many of our new programs that opportunity to be integrated with either two or all three of those components. I would like to also say that basically on the extension side we've heard a lot of comments today about your involvement of extension and I’m sure many of my colleagues in extension are out there listening.

One of the things they've done for us and turn getting ready for this is really help coordinate and basically put together the listening sessions for this new funding opportunity and that was through the national urban extension leadership and the Western metropolitan Center for research and extension they provided lead, as well as the Farm Bureau. We basically had four listening sessions which went really well. As well as some writing comments and we're going to talk about some of those findings when we get into that part of it. One of the things I really impressed with this program is the overbite. When I started 30 years ago and there's just so many programs that we've had that have had some relationship to or impact. And basically programs that help support people, both in urban and rural agriculture. And one of the things we will do is you'll learn more over time, is that we do have a number of programs that are related to this new opportunity.

They don't they don't duplicate it, but the compliments, we have programs related beginning farmer rancher development program on education, we have basically, kind of programs related to sustainable agriculture, research, and education. We have programs related to organic agriculture all sorts of aspects of
plants science and food science and even in the area of controlled environments. I’ve served on those multi state committee so for many years ago. So we basically have a lot of things that relate, and one of the things we try to always do is find the right fit for people that come to us and looking for funding to help support what they do.

One thing I do need to want to emphasize is we're an extra rural funding agency, we don't have any of our own lab, we don't have any of our own classrooms. We do everything through competitive grants or capacity funds, which are the form of the funds we've been basically set-up to do that to support the land grant system, initially, but our applicant base has grown substantially over the years. We operate under something like 60 different authorities now and funding opportunities. So it's a very complicated it's very I would say complicated, but it does each one of them has a special function but where we can combine. Basically, the same criteria in terms of things like evaluation, but we'll do that. When I first came to USDA and NIFA there's one program I'll kind of like to talk about an USDA and extension service, back 30 years ago there's a program that I think there's some symmetries are some simulations that does, I should say some similarities.

That, I think, are kind of very relevant to where this program is going, you know, was the first program I stood up and the second competitive grant program in the extension and that was the ag ability program to help people, farmers and ranchers with disabilities or people who wanted to enter farming and ranching that had a disability. It was also set up as a basically, a collaboration between the extension system and nonprofit disability organizations, so there are two entities involved from the start. Over the years, what I’ve seen is it's really supported. What I would call the diversity.

Diversity in tech on basically inclusion and access throughout those years and we've done that, through initially it was just the 1862 that were eligible, but at the same time, we always included encourage them through our phase two to work with the 1890s and include them as subcontractors or partners. Back in about the early 2000’s mid 1990s became eligible applicants and they did apply and we actually supported them to come to our national training workshops and learn how the program works.

So that they can get a better understanding how they might write a competitive grant and we do have we have funded at 1890 institutions. The other thing we have done is we've included the 1984 institutions which are the native American institutions and many years ago, I went to the falcon Conference which is basically a conference that is held to as a coordinating conference between all of the Native American colleges across the country. We talked about the ag ability program and we now have an Ag. ability project and grant. In South Dakota on the Lakota Nation, the support stuff basically a native Americans and helping them, those with disabilities, continue to be productive in agriculture and do what they enjoy. One of the things I’ve always found very, I’ve always liked about this program and last week we had the national training workshop.

We have over 220 people participate in that and over 30 of those were farmers and ranchers and I always can go enjoy doing this because you really get to hear from the people. That this program has made a difference in their quality of life. And that's what attracted me to taking on the charge of have actually helped me stand up this urban Indian emerging ag Program. Because I do see those same that same types of capacity and capabilities, with this program to improve the quality of life for people in underserved communities.

With that I think what I’m going to do, I just gave you some background on the NIFA and some of our functions and some of our programs we’ve been involved with.

I’m going to talk a little bit about the authorization and the Farm Bill and then I’m going to talk about what some of the things we've done to help prepare for this meeting with the Advisory Council.
And some of our findings from stakeholder input, as well as in some of our basically some of the attributes in our funding opportunity to our competitive advantage program, so next slide please.

So you probably have a lot of this information already, and it really is basically the statutory language that was the last farm bill. And basically, this is the section that has do competitive research. With basically a research, education, extension initiative and it basically authorized competitive research and extension grants and education and consultation with the urban ag and innovative production advisory committee established under the section 222(b)of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. That is the authorization, that is, you are the committee that we're meeting with.

It says Secretary may make competitive grants to support the research, the education extension activities and again for the purpose of facilitate the development of our indoor urban indoor and other emerging agriculture. And as Leslie mentioned, we haven't defined those closest so we want to be as broad as we can, in terms of that context. It talks about what I call the phases of agriculture production through markets in a stretch with production, harvesting transportation, aggregation, packaging, distribution, what pan markets, but then it also, next slide please.

Talks about the different priorities that are identified in the authorizing language, and you can see there's eight of them I apologize for the size of these I believe you have all of this, and your briefing materials that was prepared for you a few months ago, and so talks about eight different types of priorities and that's a very broad stroke if you look at that.

I’m not going to get too much into these, you've got those you can see what they are, but you know it talks it's everything from assessing development, strategies for radiation contamination, production management, identify promoting the horticultural social economic factors that contribute assess stuff where have an indoor and emerging any production analyzing the means by which new sites are determined, including evaluation.

Exploring new technologies, examining building material efficiencies etc. and developing new crop varieties for Ag. Production to connect to new markets and then, of course, examining the impact of crop exposure to urban elements and environment, quality, food safety, so what we did is, next slide please.

Preparation for the Advisory Committee and consultation. There's basic basically they're all our authorization provided mandatory spending $10 million and authorized. Appropriations up to $10 million each year from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2023 as of, yet we have not received any appropriated funds for this program. So when we were looking at this, to analyze the results it's basically, what are the most current and urgent needs. That we found out through so listening our stakeholder input and we did that in 2020 and I mentioned the component that was provided and supported by the extension system and the Farm Bureau and as well as the Metropolitan Center and Western Province session. And then we want to do, of course, we took that information we analyze the results, and when we prepared a draft request for applications based upon that stakeholder input, next slide please. So in addition to that, we put out a Federal Register Notice that was prior to the listening session and basically we asked the same things what their most current energy needs were, we received, I think 99 responses back.

They were provided with the authorizing language, and then they were asked to prioritize their stages and the 8-priority area listed in the authorization and let us know what they thought were the most urgent unmet needs that could be addressed through research extension or education. Next slide please.

So this is how we put it, this is the question. That was sent to the Federal Register, one of the questions we had two questions sent with the Federal Register notice, as well as the question that was put up during the listening sessions, with a voting response and also a basically a sign in response from people who had
signed up for the but had not participated and they got it. We analyze all those results and again it was looking at Dag production harvesting and I just mentioned, all those so I’m not going to go through them again so they basically asked them to pick one, next slide please.

The second question was those eight priorities listed below which priority has the greatest and most current, most urgent REE, would basically research, education, extension need in developing urban indoor agriculture that has not been adequately addressed in others federal programs, and again is that list of eight different priorities which we just discussed briefly, next slide please.

So we took all of that input and we analyze it we got to over 140 responses to the listening sessions, so, if you look at this for the food system stages. And let me the colors basically mean the blue was listening sessions, the Federal Register Notice was the total Federal Register responses. And the Federal Register responses were kind of mixed we had some responses that were essentially one response that represented an entire organization or some academic community or something on that order or some professional society. And then we had one where there was, I would call it a writing campaign, where an organization.

Members that organization basically sent the exact same response and individually, so he said well, does that make a difference, or not. So we took a look at taking those out and just basically using that as one input, which would be equivalent to some of the organizations. And said does that make a difference in the priorities and you can see that and the reality is it really didn't.

There are two really stood out production was basically the top one and markets was the other most important current an urgent need. So it's basically both ends of that the system that says the stages from productions markets were considered the most relevant and current and most urgent needs. Next slide please. So we did the same thing with the second question, which looked at the eight different priorities listen authorization. We did the analytics fear um we had one that stood out number three, which was over 25% of the respondents indicated that that was a priority and that was identifying and promoting the horticultural social and economic factors that contribute to successful urban indoor and other emerging Ag production. And number four and seven we're pretty close depending on how you looked at the difference they're both around 12 or 13% total responses. And so that was information we took in and we thought well you know we're going to have we don't have a not one to one a novel year and, if we want to try and put together a funding opportunity and try and get it focused, but yet make sure we still inclusive of all of authorizing priorities, as well as the different stages.

Why don't we point I basically say Look, we did this analysis, these are what our findings were, these are the priorities. And, and maybe it can help us in terms of putting together the panel and the peer review panel and basically making some decisions on where we can be most effective at this stage now again this, is just this initial year. Next slide please.

The other thing to keep in mind is, which I thought you'd be interested, who are the eligible applicants in the authorization, because every program we have. NIFA has different eligibility I should see all have different hours, but there are some differences, so you want to let your community know who the eligible applicants, this one read very broadly its very similar Agriculture food research initiative called AFRI. So there's basically almost no limit on who's eligible to apply for this authorization and it can be individual organizations, it can be groups of organizations, whatever it might be. Next slide please.

But one thing we do want to do is, we will probably want to try and encourage collaboration between one or more entities. But I can't really talk about in terms of when things are NIFA competitive funding attributes, there are certain things we do to maintain integrity quality an applicant support. Out of fairness, we can't release what's in the RFA until it's actually goes out goes for review and then goes out to be released and part of that as we want to get your input and also we want to make sure it's authorization compliant basically it includes everything that's in the authorization.
We are clear about the purpose of the priorities and again part of what we're doing with that freeze analysis is kind of get an idea well for this year, this these might be the priorities. But if you really have a great product and it is something really if you need to do we're going to review it as long as it meets the is almost as a compliant with the authorization. And we want to make sure they're the fairness and we screen for conflicts of interest, so when we put together our panels, we do ask them about any conflicts of interest, they may have. And we also asked the applicant about any conflicts, they may have, and then we'll do some of our own checking on that as well, so we can be sure that there are no conflicts, and then we also maintain review or confidentiality, no one gets to know who’s reviewed the applications. that's just our standard protocol.

We also have our programs are all what we call peer review. That means that the panelists have a science background the business background. Non-government organization back and whatever it might be. That relates to what is being requested in terms of the type of applications that terms of the science areas. Whatever it might be the education, the extension components of what is in authorized in that Program. Every application that meets the minimum qualifications, in other words if they've responded that it has no relevance to the program we will review it.

But any every program that application that meets those qualifications will receive a minimum of three reviews. And then there will be a peer rating in ranking process that's what we call the panel and they will be asked, they will receive the same evaluation processing criteria to make those decisions that the applicant receives so that's part of making sure this quality in the Program. We also do another thing number of other things along the way to help healthy applicants, because I mentioned, we have a lot of different programs. And if someone contacts will have a point of contact for this funding opportunity or several just like every other program funny opportunity we put out there. And if you read an application or a funding opportunity that will request for applications and you say, I think that might be a fit. Please, we encourage people to reach out to the point of contact on that particular program and talk it through with them, because they might. And if you have a lot of knowledge of what NIFA does or other agencies. You might build a point in another direction where they might have a better fit for the program or you can say hey yeah that's that looks great go ahead and submit it I think it's going to make I think that's going to be a good fit for the Program. The other thing we do is we have applicant webinars and the point of that is once the RFA is released. We would find a webinar that basically goes through all the criteria evaluation, the purpose, the priorities, how they will be reviewed all of that information so that they know what to expect.

We do these fairly regularly. We will do special specific ones just for this program. Beginning of February, we get a lot of participation. In February, I organized one for basically applicants who had not been successful in the past or had never applied for a program. We had 2000 people register for that webinar. We had 897, peak participating in the webinar and basically we broke it down into both the primary session and then some breakout sessions and the primary session was provided by someone who's very skilled at walking through the basics. Of the credit grant process, and one of things you really need to take into consideration is what's important, in terms of helping you put together a good application within had sessions that talked about.

Basically, some of the basically the big things not to do some of the big mistakes, that type of thing we had one to talk about basically, how to find partners if this is something that we're you need to have multiple entities involved, and then we had another one that talked about basically all of our other some of our other funding opportunities that might be of interest. Then we also have reviews and summaries, so the reviews once they review the application and again it's great to have peer reviews, because they learn
from this. They learn what it takes to make, put a good application together and you can't do this overnight, it takes weeks to put together good application. They also figure out they also provide summaries of the discussion during the panel to give back to the applicant, throughout the entire process we look for stakeholder input. We do that during meetings like this we do that at actually have specific language and all of our funding opportunities provide stakeholder input on any specific funding opportunity.

We go out to programs, and we listened and we listened to what they have to say, and we bring it back on how we can improve our fund or funding opportunities and as well as our processes for review. And we also get that same review at the end of every panel from the panelists themselves how did it go, what can we do differently. What changes can we make, so that is just some of the stakeholder input we get. I would think that I’ve been in government long time, and I think. What we do really is basically be the gold standard for how we basically include these what, I call the important attributes of integrity, quality an applicant support.

One of the things I do want to say is that over the years, one of the things I find is I've been talking now for quite a bit and that's enough for me. I have kind of a tagline and developed over the last couple of years, and it really goes listen, learn, inform, and energized. So with that, I think I have completed what I would like to talk about I’ll probably come up with some things later if you ask me some questions, but again let's go to the next slide please. At this point, any if you have any questions or comments, I would, I would like to hear them. I might also add it's just it's a team I'm not the only one, as a point of contact, I we never. One of the things I learned years ago as a supervisor is never leave one person in charge of a program because you have to have succession planning and you don't want to lose that that knowledge base.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO** All right, thank you Bradley we do have Tara Chadwick's hand is up.

**Member Tara Chadwick** Hello Bradley thank you so much for your very thorough presentation and introduction, for me, my first introduction to the National Institute of food and agriculture, and you guys is funding opportunities. Most of what you described sounds very consistent with the other agencies that I’ve reviewed for over the past couple decades. You know, in terms of what you described one thing that I wanted to know is the language that you mentioned for stakeholder input, which is really good that seems pretty unique among the other grant review panels that I’ve served on and that's really good. The other thing that I wanted to note is that eligibility for individuals, which I think is really important, like for me as like a micro producer and you know mom and person doing probably too many things at once in life.

Collaboration sometimes are very, very difficult and a lot of times in my experience collaboration can be also very oppressive, especially when it comes to large institutions that are used to exploiting the people who are willing to do the work, and so I think that. I’m really glad to see that eligibility, because sometimes it just comes down to even getting those letters of support at the right time it doesn't necessarily mean that you're not collaborating with other people it just means that the collaboration is more.

You know, it's not an institutionalized type of collaboration, and so I think that I’m really glad that you have eligibility for individuals and I hope that. I know that a lot of federal grants, you know are really interested in seeing collaboration, but I hope that outlook to how you know the informal collaboration is also taken into account. I did have one question or concern, I guess, we got these slides yes last night. But there were some additional materials that we got last week that I was able to review and I think one of them was like.
Maybe last year's call for proposals, and one thing that I wanted to note in there, based on my particular geography, where I live, is, I noticed that there was a requirement that the eligibility for the programs is also based on, there was a requirement in there, where you had to use the USDA atlas as your indicator for food insecurity, like the food deserts and I just wanted to know that atlas when I looked at it is based on information from 2019. So, and where I live there in 2019 they were to grocery stores within a mile of where I live, and now there's zero because both one of them was knocked down over the last week and now no longer. Literally raised from the face of the earth and the other one closed down during COVID, and so I just wanted to ask for you to please note that. Our realities have changed a lot over COVID and 2019 is like eons ago so just maybe I don't know, I don't know if it's going to get updated sooner, because of the census, but I just wanted you to know that in your in your guidance.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA Well that's definitely a good comment for NRCS. This is an inaugural year we have not actually put out a request for application for NIFA yet, but I'm sure my NRCS colleagues are taking note of what you just said.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Yes, we are taking note of that, so thank you um the next one up, we have a Sally Brown.

Member Sally Brown Hi thanks for your information, and as a university type, I know that NIFA is one of the best and very competitive sources for funding for research. I also know that the process of filling out the paperwork and submitting a grant application is often overwhelming for a university professor and so I’m wondering if it might be best for this program to gear calls to researchers or extension folks that are familiar with this type of funding and what you're looking for and that do work in pertinent areas that could then be transferred. To users in the region and that other programs within USDA might be better sources of funding, like the EQIP program, for example, for urban producers, rather than the NIFA program for grants. It just seems, as someone who's written these grants, this is a big ask for a lot of people that are not familiar with the process and a lot of fundamental research could go a long way. If the call is written correctly.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA Thank you.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO All right, thank you Bobby Wilson next.

Member Bobby Wilson Yes I’m going to make this short. Um what one of the challenges for Community based organizations is writing grants as it relates to large institution that were primarily designed for large institution. One of the conversations that we've been having with National Science Foundation is that they need to reconsider the way that they do grants and at least we have them talking about funding grassroots organizations like Metro Atlanta Urban directive when I first started talking with them.

They said they couldn't do it, it had to go through a large institution, so you are large institution, and most of the folks that we are going to be working with need not $2.6 million which I’m on a grant with Cornell right now for two $2.6 million. Most of us just need a million dollars or have a million dollars. Keep our operation going for five six years, so I would really love to know where you all are on funding grassroots organization and what percentage of your money has been satisfied for organizations like one that we're going to be working with urban farm.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA Yeah, I can't say anything specifically about this funding opportunity, but I can say I've been involved with beginning farmers and ranchers’ development program for a number of years, and that is a lot of non-government organizations and some of those are very much
smaller. And it's focused on the one aspect of informal education, but it does, it’s inclusive of both urban
and rural agriculture, so I. And it's got a number, there's about 16 different priorities, so you don't have to
cover everything, but there are lots of things you can do with that and it gets a lot of applications and it's
got a good success rate.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright, thank you for that I’m not seeing any other
hands, are there any other Members that we'd like to make any comments on this topic.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA We wore them out.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Well thanks very much Bradley, there's one, Tara.

Member Tara Chadwick Yeah when will it be released that actual call?

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA We don't have an exact date, we do have to again part of is to maintain the quality, we need to take into
consideration, all of the committee's input we've got a draft ready, but then because it's a new program it
pretty much has to go all the way up through officer general counsel. Just to make sure it complies with
all of the requirements so that can take a while, so I you know I can't say exactly but you're probably
looking at close to two months.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright. Someone told me, we may still have
another hand up I’m not seeing one, is there any other member that wants to make a comment. Alright so
again, Bradley if people have some thoughts or comments or ideas, following this session you're still open
to getting feedback from them.

Brad Rein National Science Liaison, NIFA Yeah, yes we'll get it and we'll use it. If we can get it before
it goes forward, if not, you know there's hope it will be another year so.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright, very good, thank you very much for your
time and that information. Alright, so we're next on our list is actually we're going to be in closing out the
day we have with us. The Deputy Undersecretary Robert Bonnie is going to give us some closing
remarks. And I just wanted to give a quick introduction of him. He is the Undersecretary for USDA, Farm
Production and Conservation mission area. Where he oversees the Farm Service Agency, the Natural
Resources, Conservation Service and the Risk Management Agency and there's also a Business Center
tied within the mission area that he oversees as well. Mr. Bonnie has a master's degree from Duke in
Forestry and Environmental Management. Prior to his confirmation he served as Deputy Chief of Staff as
Climate Advisor at USDA, he lives with his family and Loudoun County Virginia. Undersecretary
Bonnie, we welcome you and the platform is yours.

Robert Bonnie Under Secretary, Farm Production & Conservation:
Great thanks Leslie, I realize I’m at, you guys are at the end of a day here we're at the end of the day, so I
won't take too much of your time, but my big message to you all is thanks. The committee here is going to
do important work for all of us to help us do a better job of around Urban Agriculture, Innovation, and
agriculture, and so a huge thanks from all of us to you. I was in Kentucky yesterday, and I was with the
governor doing a proclamation for National Ag day and urban ag kept coming up again and again, both in
the context of my conversations with FSA and NRCS staff there and their interest in Louisville near
where I grew up and other parts of the state, but also in the context of an Ag Tech Council that the
governor has formed there and lots of we were hearing from companies about greenhouse gas our
greenhouses and innovations in agriculture that many of which I think are things that you all are far, far
more familiar with than I am, but.
I find that as I’m starting to get out the urban ag piece innovation and agriculture is something that's driving a lot of the conversation, a lot of places, and of course I don't need to tell you all about the enormous benefits both for agriculture, obviously, for communities, but also for USDA as well. Obviously, the importance of access to local produce to healthy produce I’ve spent a better part of a career in conservation and I’m really interested in some of the conservation aspects of this.

Obviously, jobs and economic development for people in the sense of community that that can come from whether their community gardens urban agriculture or other opportunities there and for USDA for us, how do we diversify agriculture. The folks that are in farming but also the agricultural systems that that we support and, as you all heard some today we're already making investments they're just. You just heard from the folks from NIF a but obviously I think you've heard from the Chief and NRCS and others.

You know we're making investments, but, honestly, we can do a better job, and one of the ways for us to do a better job is to is to listen to you all to get your input. I just had a conversation about some of the barriers to grant programs, those are things we need to think about you all will have other. Ideas about barriers or places where we can think about prioritizing resources and we're open to all that, so I will conclude with where I began, which is a huge thanks for your engagement, for your insight. In this meeting, but in future meetings to come. And you know, we look forward to working with you as we think about how we better serve all of agriculture and in particularly in urban areas, so thanks and Leslie I will turn it back to you.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Okay, thank you Undersecretary Bonnie, we very much appreciate your time late in the afternoon. Thank you, we weren't going to take any questions right.

Robert Bonnie Under Secretary, Farm Production & Conservation If you want me to take a few questions, I’m happy to take a few questions. I prefer softballs, but if you guys want to throw some high fastballs I'm happy to. A few of you guys, I know you've had a long day so.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Committee members is there anything you want to say to the Undersecretary. I don't see any hands up, so it looks like you're going to get up easy. So thank you again for joining us, you very much appreciate.

Robert Bonnie Under Secretary, Farm Production & Conservation: I will just say all of you know Meg. Meg who's spending a lot of time on this obviously Leslie as well. If there's any follow up I know all of us are available to explore questions comments, even a few complaints so thanks.

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO Alright, thank you very much, I wanted to just make a couple of operational statements as we close out our day and then I wanted to give our acting chair, have a moment to make some closing remarks as well if she'd like to do that.

The first thing I wanted to say was as a reminder, the meeting is being recorded, it will be posted on the Federal Advisory Committee website at farmers.gov/urban and you can view any segment again catch up on anything you missed feel free to share that link with other people that might be interested in this discussion that we just had and also for tomorrow, I think we've got a really, really interesting and powerful agenda you're going to get to meet the new Director for the Office of Urban Agriculture Innovative Production he'll be on, the FSA Administrator has a video message for the group.

You can have a conversation about setting up the urban offices and from the folks who've been leading that within USDA. It's also going to be a chance we're going to have a significant part of the time, where the committee can talk about their priorities, whether they're going to develop any subcommittees to
address some of those priorities and help them have a conversation where they can move forward on setting up the path going forward, and then the big moment at the end of the day is the public forum where we get to hear from all of the folks who had registered to speak. I should clarify that a moment we had over 140 people request to speak and we're not going to be able to fit all of them into the segment tomorrow.

We're going to hear from about 40 folks tomorrow and then we're going to have a follow-up session on April 1st where we'll get to hear from the rest of the folks who don't have a chance to talk tomorrow and the people should all have been notified at this point, as I understand it. Whether or not they'll be on the platform tomorrow, so I just wanted to share that out before turning it over to Angela you want to make a few closing remarks.

**Angela Mason, Senior Director, Windy City Harvest**

Thank you, Leslie, I just wanted to say thank you to all of the fellow committee members and the USDA team for bringing us all together for these two days and great discussion today and I look forward to a deeper discussion tomorrow about the committee Member priority areas, thank you and I will see you tomorrow.

**Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP and DFO**

All right, thank you very much, so we will be getting tomorrow at 11 o'clock Eastern time and we look forward to hearing, as I said, what the public has to say to the committee and see how that shapes the path going forward so thank you just want to mention that the meeting is now adjourned thanks.

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